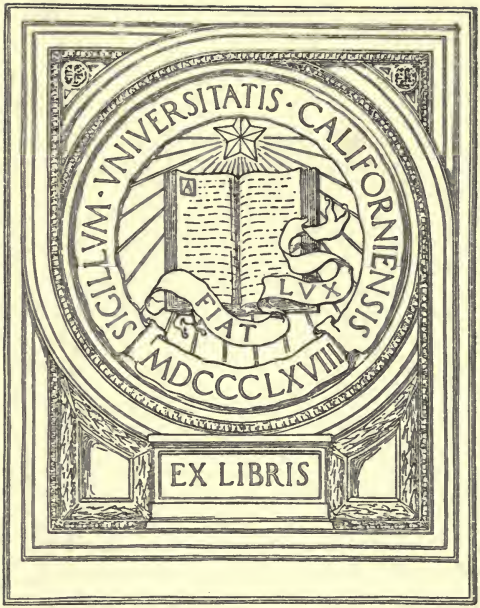
MISS MINK'S SOLDIER AND OTHER STORIES

ALICE HEGAN RICE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AND OTHER STORIES

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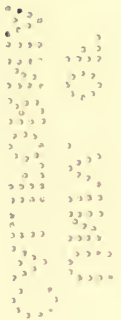

Then Miss Mink received a shock

MISS MINK'S SOLDIER
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

ALICE HEGAN RICE

Author of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," "Mr. Opp," "Calvary Alley," etc.

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TO

THE LADY OF THE DECORATION

A MEMENTO OF MANY HAPPY DAYS
SPENT TOGETHER "EAST OF SUEZ"

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MISS MINK'S SOLDIER

MISS MINK'S SOLDIER

MISS MINK sat in church with lips compressed and hands tightly clasped in her black alpaca lap, and stubbornly refused to comply with the request that was being made from the pulpit. She was a small desiccated person, with a sharp chin and a sharper nose, and narrow faded eyes that through the making of innumerable buttonholes had come to resemble them.

For over forty years she had sat in that same pew facing that same minister, regarding him second only to his Maker, and striving in thought and deed to follow his precepts. But the time had come when Miss Mink's blind allegiance wavered.

Ever since the establishment of the big Cantonment near the city, Dr. Morris, in order to encourage church attendance, had been insistent in his request that every member of his congre-

gation should take a soldier home to Sunday dinner.

Now it was no lack of patriotism that made Miss Mink refuse to do her part. Every ripple in the small flag that fluttered over her humble dwelling sent a corresponding ripple along her spinal column. When she essayed to sing "My Country, 'T is of Thee," in her high, quavering soprano, she invariably broke down from sheer excess of emotion. But the American army fighting for right and freedom in France, and the Army individually tracking mud into her spotless cottage, were two very different things. Miss Mink had always regarded a man in her house much as she regarded a gnat in her eye. There was but one course to pursue in either case—elimination!

But her firm stand in the matter had not been maintained without much misgiving. Every Sunday when Dr. Morris made his earnest appeal, something within urged her to comply. She was like an automobile that gets cranked up and then refuses to go. Church-going instead of being her greatest joy came to be a

nightmare. She no longer lingered in the vestibule, for those highly cherished exchanges of inoffensive gossip that constituted her social life. Nobody seemed to have time for her. Every one was busy with a soldier. Within the sanctuary it was no better. Each khaki-clad figure that dotted the congregation claimed her attention as a possible candidate for hospitality. And each one that presented himself to her vision was indignantly repudiated. One was too old, another too young, one too stylish, another had forgotten to wash his ears. She found a dozen excuses for withholding her invitation.

But this morning as she sat upright and uncompromising in her short pew, she was suddenly thrown into a state of agitation by the appearance in the aisle of an un-ushered soldier who, after hesitating beside one or two pews, slipped into the seat beside her. It seemed almost as if Providence had taken a hand and since she had refused to select a soldier, had prompted a soldier to select her.

During the service she sat gazing straight at

the minister without comprehending a word that he said. Never once did her glance stray to that khaki-clad figure beside her, but her thoughts played around him like lightning. What if she should get up her courage and ask him to dinner, how would she ever be able to walk out the street with him? And once she had got him to her cottage, what on earth would she talk to him about? Her hands grew cold as she thought about it. Yet something warned her it was now or never, and that it was only by taking the hated step and getting it over with, that she could regain the peace of mind that had of late deserted her.

The Doxology found her weakening, but the Benediction stiffened her resolve, and when the final Amen sounded, she turned blindly to the man beside her, and said, hardly above her breath:

"If you ain't got any place to go to dinner, you can come home with me."

The tall figure turned toward her, and a pair of melancholy brown eyes looked down into hers:

"You will excuse if I do not quite comprehend your meaning," he said politely, with a strong foreign accent.

Miss Mink was plunged into instant panic; suppose he was a German? Suppose she should be convicted for entertaining a spy! Then she remembered his uniform and was slightly reassured.

"I said would you come home to dinner with me?" she repeated weakly, with a fervent prayer that he would decline.

But the soldier had no such intention. He bowed gravely, and picked up his hat and overcoat.

Miss Mink, looking like a small tug towing a big steamer, shamefacedly made her way to the nearest exit, and got him out through the Sunday-school room. She would take him home through a side street, feed him and send him away as soon as possible. It was a horrible ordeal, but Miss Mink was not one to turn back once she had faced a difficult situation. As they passed down the broad steps into the brilliant October sunshine, she noticed with relief that

his shoes were not muddy. Then, before she could make other observations, her mind was entirely preoccupied with a large, firm hand that grasped her elbow, and seemed to half lift her slight weight from step to step. Miss Mink's elbow was not used to such treatment and it indignantly freed itself before the pavement was reached. The first square was traveled in embarrassed silence, then Miss Mink made a heroic effort to break the ice:

"My name is Mink," she said, "Miss Libby Mink. I do dress-making over on Sixth Street."

"I am Bowinski," volunteered her tall companion, "first name Alexis. I am a machinist before I enlist in the army."

"I knew you were some sort of a Dago," said Miss Mink.

"But no, Madame, I am Russian. My home is in Kiev in Ukrania."

"Why on earth didn't you stay there?" Miss Mink asked from the depths of her heart.

The soldier looked at her earnestly. "Because of the persecution," he said. "My father he was in exile. His family was suspect. I

come alone to America when I am but fifteen."

"Well I guess you're sorry enough now that you came," Miss Mink said, "Now that you've got drafted."

They had reached her gate by this time, but Bowinski paused before entering: "Madame mistakes!" he said with dignity. "I was *not* drafted. The day America enter the war, that day I give up my job I have held for five years, and enlist. America is my country, she take me in when I have nowhere to go. It is my proud moment when I fight for her!"

Then it was that Miss Mink took her first real look at him, and if it was a longer look than she had ever before bestowed upon man, we must put it down to the fact that he was well worth looking at, with his tall square figure, and his serious dark face lit up at the present with a somewhat indignant enthusiasm.

Miss Mink pushed open the gate and led the way into her narrow yard. She usually entered the house by way of the side door which opened into the dining room, which was also her bedroom by night, and her sewing room by day.

But this morning, after a moment's hesitation, she turned a key in the rusty lock of the front door, and let a flood of sunshine dispel the gloom of the room. The parlor had been furnished by Miss Mink's parents some sixty years ago, and nothing had been changed. A customer had once suggested that if the sofa was taken away from the window, and the table put in its place, the room would be lighter. Miss Mink had regarded the proposition as preposterous. One might as well have asked her to move her nose around to the back of her head, or to exchange the positions of her eyes and ears!

You have seen a drop of water caught in a crystal? Well, that was what Miss Mink was like. She moved in the tiniest possible groove with her home at one end and her church at the other. Is it any wonder that when she beheld a strange young foreigner sitting stiffly on her parlor sofa, and realized that she must entertain him for at least an hour, that panic seized her?

"I better be seeing to dinner," she said

hastily. "You can look at the album till I get things dished up."

Private Bowinski, surnamed Alexis, sat with knees awkwardly hunched and obediently turned the leaves of the large album, politely scanning the placid countenances of departed Minks for several generations.

Miss Mink, moving about in the inner room, glanced in at him from time to time. After the first glance she went to the small store room and got out a jar of sweet pickle, and after the second she produced a glass of crab apple jelly. Serving a soldier guest who had voluntarily adopted her country, was after all not so distasteful, if only she did not have to talk to him. But already the coming ordeal was casting its baleful shadow.

When they were seated opposite one another at the small table, her worst fears were realized. They could neither of them think of anything to say. If she made a move to pass the bread to him he insisted upon passing it to her. When she rose to serve him, he rose to serve her. She

had never realized before how oppressive excessive politeness could be.

The one point of consolation for her lay in the fact that he was enjoying his dinner. He ate with a relish that would have flattered any hostess. Sometimes when he put his knife in his mouth she winced with apprehension, but aside from a few such lapses in etiquette he conducted himself with solemn and punctilious propriety.

When he had finished his second slice of pie, and pushed back his chair, Miss Mink waited hopefully for him to say good-bye. He was evidently getting out his car fare now, searching with thumb and forefinger in his vest pocket.

"If it is not to trouble you more, may I ask a match?" he said.

"A match? What on earth do you want with a match?" demanded Miss Mink. Then a look of apprehension swept over her face. Was this young man actually proposing to profane the virgin air of her domicile with the fumes of tobacco?

"Perhaps you do not like that I should smoke?" Bowinski said instantly. "I beg you excuse, I—"

"Oh! that's all right," said Miss Mink in a tone that she did not recognize as her own, "the matches are in that little bisque figure on the parlor mantel. I'll get you to leave the front door open, if you don't mind. It's kinder hot in here."

Five o'clock that afternoon found Miss Mink and Alexis Bowinski still sitting facing each other in the front parlor. They were mutually exhausted, and conversation after having suffered innumerable relapses, seemed about to succumb.

"If there's any place else you want to go, you mustn't feel that you've got to stay here," Miss Mink had urged some time after dinner. But Alexis had answered:

"I know only two place. The Camp and the railway depot. I go on last Sunday to the railway depot. The Chaplain at the Camp advise me I go to church this morning. Perhaps I make a friend."

"But what do the other soldiers do on Sunday?" Miss Mink asked desperately.

"They promenade. Always promenade. Except they go to photo-plays, and dance hall. It is the hard part of war, the waiting part."

Miss Mink agreed with him perfectly as she helped him wait. She had never spent such a long day in her life. At a quarter past five he rose to go. A skillful word on her part would have expedited matters, but Miss Mink was not versed in the social trick of speeding a departing guest. Fifteen minutes dragged their weary length even after he was on his feet. Then Miss Mink received a shock from which it took her an even longer time to recover. Alexis Bowinski, having at last arrived at the moment of departure, took her hand in his and, bowing awkwardly, raised it to his lips and kissed it! Then he backed out of the cottage, stalked into the twilight and was soon lost to sight beyond the hedge.

Miss Mink sank limply on the sofa by the window, and regarded her small wrinkled hand with stern surprise. It was a hand that had

never been kissed before and it was tingling in the strangest and most unaccountable manner.

The following week was lived in the afterglow of that eventful Sunday. She described the soldier's visit in detail to the few customers who came in. She went early to prayer-meeting in order to tell about it. And in the telling she subordinated everything to the dramatic climax:

"I never was so took back in my life!" she said. "After setting there for four mortal hours with nothing to say, just boring each other to death, for him to get up like that and make a regular play-actor bow, and kiss my hand! Well, I never *was* so took back!"

And judging from the number of times Miss Mink told the story, and the conscious smile with which she concluded it, it was evident that she was not averse to being "took back."

By the time Sunday arrived she had worked herself up to quite a state of excitement. Would Bowinski be at church? Would he sit on her side of the congregation? Would he

wait after the service to speak to her? She put on her best bonnet, which was usually reserved for funerals, and pinned a bit of thread lace over the shabby collar of her coat.

The moment she entered church all doubts were dispelled. There in her pew, quite as if he belonged there, sat the tall young Russian. He even stepped into the aisle for her to pass in, helped her off with her coat, and found the place for her in the hymn-book. Miss Mink realized with a glow of satisfaction, that many curious heads were craning in her direction. For the first time since she had gone forward forty years ago to confess her faith, she was an object of interest to the congregation!

When the benediction was pronounced several women came forward ostensibly to speak to her, but in reality to ask Bowinski to go home to dinner with them. She waived them all aside.

"No, he's going with me!" she announced firmly, and Bowinski obediently picked up his hat and accompanied her.

For the following month this scene was en-

acted each Sunday, with little change to outward appearances but with great change to Miss Mink herself. In the mothering of Bowinski she had found the great adventure of her life. She mended his clothes, and made fancy dishes for him, she knit him everything that could be knitted, including an aviator's helmet for which he had no possible use. She talked about "my soldier" to any one who would listen.

Bowinski accepted her attention with grave politeness. He wore the things she made for him, he ate the things she cooked for him, he answered all her questions and kissed her hand at parting. Miss Mink considered his behavior perfect.

One snowy Sunday in late November Miss Mink was thrown into a panic by his failure to appear on Sunday morning. She confided to Sister Bacon in the adjoining pew that she was afraid he had been sent to France. Sister Bacon promptly whispered to her husband that he *had* been sent to France, and the rumor spread until after church quite a little group

gathered around Miss Mink to hear about it.

"What was his company?" some one asked.

"Company C, 47th Infantry," Miss Mink repeated importantly.

"Why, that's my boy's company," said Mrs. Bacon. "*They* haven't gone to France."

The thought of her soldier being in the trenches even, was more tolerable to Miss Mink than the thought of his being in town and failing to come to her for Sunday dinner.

"I bet he's sick," she announced. "I wish I could find out."

Mrs. Bacon volunteered to ask her Jim about him, and three days later stopped by Miss Mink's cottage to tell her that Bowinski had broken his leg over a week before and was in the Base Hospital.

"Can anybody go out there that wants to?" demanded Miss Mink.

"Yes, on Sundays and Wednesdays. But you can't count on the cars running today. Jim says everything's snowed under two feet deep."

Miss Mink held her own counsel but she knew what she was going to do. Her soldier was

in trouble, he had no family or friends. She was going to him.

With trembling fingers she packed a small basket with some apples, a jar of jelly and a slice of cake. There was no time for her own lunch, so she hurriedly put on her coat and twisting a faded scarf about her neck trudged out into the blustery afternoon.

The blizzard of the day before had almost suspended traffic, and when she finally succeeded in getting a car, it was only to find that it ran no farther than the city limits.

"How much farther is it to the Camp?" Miss Mink asked desperately.

"About a mile," said the conductor. "I wouldn't try it if I was you, the walking's fierce."

But Miss Mink was not to be turned back. Gathering her skirts as high as her sense of propriety would permit, and grasping her basket she set bravely forth. The trip alone to the Camp, under the most auspicious circumstances, would have been a trying ordeal for her, but under the existing conditions it required nothing

less than heroism. The snow had drifted in places as high as her knees, and again and again she stumbled and almost lost her footing as she staggered forward against the force of the icy wind.

Before she had gone half a mile she was ready to collapse with nervousness and exhaustion.

"Looks like I just can't make it," she whimpered, "and yet I'm going to!"

The honk of an automobile sent her shying into a snowdrift, and when she caught her breath and turned around she saw that the machine had stopped and a hand was beckoning to her from the window.

"May I give you a lift?" asked a girl's high sweet voice and, looking up, she saw a sparkling face smiling down at her over an upturned fur collar.

Without waiting to be urged she climbed into the machine, stumbled over the rug, and sank exhausted on the cushions.

"Give me your basket," commanded the young lady. "Now put your feet on the heater. Sure you have room?"

Miss Mink, still breathless, nodded emphatically.

"It's a shame to ask anyone to ride when I'm so cluttered up," continued the girl gaily. "I'm taking these things out to my sick soldier boys."

Miss Mink, looking down, saw that the floor of the machine was covered with boxes and baskets.

"I'm going to the Hospital, too," she said.

"That's good!" exclaimed the girl. "I can take you all the way. Perhaps you have a son or a grandson out there?"

Miss Mink winced. "No, he ain't any kin to me," she said, "but I been sort of looking after him."

"How sweet of you!" said the pouting red lips with embarrassing ardor. "Just think of your walking out here this awful day at your age. Quite sure you are getting warm?"

Yes, Miss Mink was warm, but she felt suddenly old, old and shrivelled beside this radiant young thing.

"I perfectly adore going to the hospital," said

the girl, her blue eyes dancing. "Father's one of the medical directors, Major Chalmers, I expect you've heard of him. I'm Lois Chalmers."

But Miss Mink was scarcely listening. She was comparing the big luscious looking oranges in the crate, with the hard little apples in her own basket.

"Here we are!" cried Lois, as the car plowed through the snow and mud and stopped in front of a long shed-like building. Two orderlies sprang forward with smiling alacrity and began unloading the boxes.

"Aren't you the nicest ever?" cried Lois with a skillful smile that embraced them both. "Those to the medical, those to the surgical, and these to my little fat-faced Mumpsies."

Miss Mink got herself and her basket out unassisted, then stood in doubt as to what she should do next. She wanted to thank Miss Chalmers for her courtesy, but two dapper young officers had joined the group around her making a circle of masculine admirers.

Miss Mink slipped away unnoticed and pre-

sented herself at the door marked "Administration Building."

"Can you tell me where the broken-legged soldiers are?" she asked timidly of a man at a desk.

"Who do you want to see?"

"Alexis Bowinski. He come from Russia. He's got curly hair and big sort of sad eyes, and—"

"Bowinski," the man repeated, running his finger down a ledger, "A. Bowinski, Surgical Ward 5–C. Through that door, two corridors to the right midway down the second corridor."

Miss Mink started boldly forth to follow directions, but it was not until she had been ejected from the X-ray Room, the Mess Hall, and the Officers' Quarters, that she succeeded in reaching her destination. By that time her courage was at its lowest ebb. On either side of the long wards were cots, on which lay men in various stages of undress. Now Miss Mink had seen pajamas in shop windows, she had even made a pair once of silk for an ambitious groom,

but this was the first time she had ever seen them, as it were, occupied.

So acute was her embarrassment that she might have turned back at the last moment, had her eyes not fallen on the cot nearest the door. There, lying asleep, with his injured leg suspended from a pulley from which depended two heavy weights, lay Bowinski.

Miss Mink slipped into the chair between his cot and the wall. After the first glance at his pale unshaven face and the pain-lined brow, she forgot all about herself. She felt only overwhelming pity for him, and indignation at the treatment to which he was being subjected.

By and by he stirred and opened his eyes.

"Oh you came!" he said, "I mean you not to know I be in hospital. You must have the kindness not to trouble about me."

"Trouble nothing," said Miss Mink, husky with emotion, "I never knew a thing about it until today. What have they got you harnessed up like this for?"

Then Alexis with difficulty found the English words to tell her how his leg had not set straight,

had been re-broken and was now being forced into proper position.

"It is like hell, Madame," he concluded with a trembling lip, then he drew a sharp breath, "But no, I forget, I am in the army. I beg you excuse my complain."

Miss Mink laid herself out to entertain him. She unpacked her basket, and spread her meagre offerings before him. She described in detail all the surgical operations she had ever had any experience with, following some to their direst consequences. Alexis listened apathetically. Now and then a spasm of pain contracted his face, but he uttered no word of complaint.

Only once during the afternoon did his eyes brighten. Miss Mink caught the sudden change in his expression and, following his glance, saw Lois Chalmers coming through the ward. She had thrown aside her heavy fur coat, and her slim graceful little figure as alert as a bird's darted from cart to cot as she tossed packages of cigarettes to right and left.

"Here you are, Mr. Whiskers!" she was calling out gaily to one. "This is for you, Colonel

Collar Bone. Where's Cadet Limpy? Discharged? Good for him! Hello, Mr. Strong Man!" For a moment she poised at the foot of Bowinski's cot, then recognizing Miss Mink she nodded:

"So you found your soldier? I'm going back to town in ten minutes, I'll take you along if you like."

She flitted out of the ward as quickly as she had come, leaving two long rows of smiling faces in her wake. She had brought no pity, nor tenderness, nor understanding, but she had brought her fresh young beauty, and her little gift of gayety, and made men forget, at least for a moment, their pain-racked bodies and their weary brains.

Miss Mink reached her cottage that night weary and depressed. She had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and yet was too tired to prepare supper. She made her a cup of tea which she drank standing, and then crept into bed only to lie staring into the darkness tortured by the thought of those heavy weights on Bowinski's injured leg.

The result of her weariness and exposure was a sharp attack of tonsilitis that kept her in bed several weeks. The first time she was able to be up, she began to count the hours until the next visiting day at the Camp. Her basket was packed the evening before, and placed beside the box of carnations in which she had extravagantly indulged. It is doubtful whether Miss Mink was ever so happy in her life as during that hour of pleased expectancy.

As she moved feebly about putting the house in order, so that she could make an early start in the morning, she discovered a letter that the Postman had thrust under the side door earlier in the day. Across the left hand corner was pictured an American flag, and across the right was a red triangle in a circle. She hastily tore off the envelop and read:

Dear Mrs. Mink:

I am out the Hospital, getting along fine. Hope you are in the same circumstances. I am sending you a book which I got from a Dear Young Lady, in the Hospital. I really do not know what to call her because I do not know her name, but I know she deserve a nice, nice name for all good She dose to all soldiers.

I think she deserve more especially from me than to call her a Sweet Dear Lady, because that I have the discouragement, and she make me to laugh and take heart. I would ask your kind favor to please pass the book back to the Young Lady, and pleas pass my thankful word to her, and if you might be able to send me her name before that I go to France, which I learn is very soon. Excuse all errors if you pleas will. This is goodby from

Your soldier friend,

A. Bowinski.

Miss Mink read the letter through, then she sat down limply in a kitchen chair and stared at the stove. Twice she half rose to get the pen and ink on the shelf above the coal box, but each time she changed her mind, folded her arms indignantly, and went back to her stern contemplation of the stove. Presently a tear rolled down her cheek, then another, and another until she dropped her tired old face in her tired old hands, and gave a long silent sob that shook her slight body from head to foot. Then she rose resolutely and sweeping the back of her hand across her eyes, took down her writing materials. On one side of a post card she wrote the address of Alexis Bowinski, and on

the other she penned in her cramped neat writing, one line:

"Her name is Lois Chalmers. Hotel LeRoy."

This done she unpacked her basket, put her half dozen carnations in a tumbler of water and carried them into the dark parlor, pulled her chair up to the kitchen table, drew the lamp closer and patiently went back to her buttonholes.

A DARLING OF MISFORTUNE

A DARLING OF MISFORTUNE

A SHABBY but joyous citizen of the world at large was Mr. Phelan Harrihan, as, with a soul wholly in tune with the finite, he half sat and half reclined on a baggage-truck at Lebanon Junction. He was relieving the tedium of his waiting moments by entertaining a critical if not fastidious audience of three.

Beside him, with head thrust under his ragged sleeve, sat a small and unlovely bull-terrier, who, at each fresh burst of laughter, lifted a pair of languishing eyes to the face of his master, and then manifested his surplus affection by ardently licking the buttons on the sleeve of the arm that encircled him.

It was a moot question whether Mr. Harrihan resembled his dog, or whether his dog resembled him. That there was a marked similarity admitted of no discussion. If Corp's nose had been encouraged and his lower jaw

suppressed, if his intensely emotional nature had been under better control, and his sentimentality tempered with humor, the analogy would have been more complete. In taste, they were one. By birth, predilection, and instinct both were philosophers of the open, preferring an untrammeled life in Vagabondia to the collars and conventions of society. Both delighted in exquisite leisure, and spent it in pleased acquiescence with things as they are.

Some twenty-five years before, Phelan had opened his eyes upon a half-circle of blue sky, seen through the end of a canvas-covered wagon on a Western prairie, and having first conceived life to be a free-and-easy affair on a long, open road, he thereafter declined to consider it in any other light.

The only break in his nomadic existence was when a benevolent old gentleman found him, a friendless lad in a Nashville hospital, nursed him through a fever, and elected to educate him. Those were years of black captivity for Phelan, and after being crammed and coached for what seemed an interminable time, he was proudly

entered at the University, where he promptly failed in every subject and was dropped at the mid-year term.

The old gentleman, fortunately, was spared all disappointment in regard to his irresponsible protégé, for he died before the catastrophe, leaving Phelan Harrihan a legacy of fifteen dollars a month and the memory of a kind, but misguided, old man who was not quite right in his head.

Being thus provided with a sum more than adequate to meet all his earthly needs, Phelan joyously abandoned the straight and narrow path of learning, and once more betook himself to the open road.

The call of blue skies and green fields, the excitement of each day's encounter, the dramatic possibilities of every passing incident, the opportunity for quick and intimate fellowship, and above all an inherited and chronic disinclination for work, made Phelan an easy victim to that malady called by the casual tourist "wanderlust," but known in Hoboland as "railroad fever."

Only once a year did he return to civilization, don a stiff collar, and recognize an institution. During his meteoric career at the University he had been made a member of the Alpha Delta fraternity, in recognition of his varied accomplishments. Not only could he sing and dance and tell a tale with the best, but he was also a mimic and a ventriloquist, gifts which had proven invaluable in crucial conflicts with the faculty, and had constituted him a hero in several escapades. Of such material is college history made, and the Alpha Delta, recognizing the distinction of possessing this unique member, refused to accept his resignation, but unanimously demanded his presence at each annual reunion.

On June second, for five consecutive years, the ends of the earth had yielded up Phelan Harrihan; by a miracle of grace he had arrived in Nashville, decently appareled, ready to respond to his toast, to bask for his brief hour in the full glare of the calcium, then to depart again into oblivion.

It was now the first day of June and as Phelan concluded his tale, which was in fact an undress rehearsal of what he intended to tell on the morrow, he looked forward with modest satisfaction to the triumph that was sure to be his. For the hundredth time he made certain that the small brown purse, so unused to its present obesity, was safe and sound in his inside pocket.

During the pause that followed his recital, his audience grew restive.

"Go on, do it again," urged the ragged boy who sold the sandwiches, "show us how Forty Fathom Dan looked when he thought he was sinking.

"I don't dare trifle with me features," said Phelan solemnly. "How much are those sandwiches. One for five, is it? Two for fifteen, I suppose. Well, here's one for me, and one for Corp, and keep the change, kid. Ain't that the train coming?"

"It's the up train," said the station-master, rising reluctantly; "it meets yours here. I've got to be hustling."

Phelan, left without an audience, strolled up and down the platform, closely followed by Corporal Harrihan.

As the train slowed up at the little Junction, there was manifestly some commotion on board. Standing in the doorway of the rear car a small, white-faced woman argued excitedly with the conductor.

"I didn't have no ticket, I tell you!" she was saying as the train came to a stop. "I 'lowed I'd pay my way, but I lost my pocket-book. I lost it somewheres on the train here, I don't know where it is!"

"I've seen your kind before," said the conductor wearily; "what did you get on for when you didn't have anything to pay your fare with?"

"I tell you I lost my pocket-book after I got on!" she said doggedly; "I ain't going to get off, you daren't put me off!"

Phelan, who had sauntered up, grew sympathetic. He, too, had experienced the annoyance of being pressed for his fare when it was inconvenient to produce it.

"Go ahead," demanded the conductor firmly, "I don't want to push you off, but if you don't step down and out right away, I'll have it to do."

The woman's expression changed from defiance to terror. She clung to the brake with both hands and looked at him fearfully.

"No, no, don't touch me!" she cried. "Don't make me get off! I've got to get to Cincinnati. My man's there. He's been hurt in the foundry. He's—maybe he's dying now."

"I can't help that, maybe it's so and maybe it ain't. You never had any money when you got on this train and you know it. Go on, step off!"

"But I did!" she cried wildly; "I did. Oh, God! don't put me off."

The train began to move, and the conductor seized the woman's arms from behind and forced her forward. A moment more and she would be pushed off the lowest step. She turned beseeching eyes on the little group of spectators, and as she did so Phelan Harrihan sprang forward and with his hand on the rail-

ing, ran along with the slow-moving train.

With a deft movement he bent forward and apparently snatched something from the folds of her skirt.

"Get on to your luck now," he said with an encouraging smile that played havoc with the position of his features; "if here ain't your pocket-book all the time!"

The hysterical woman looked from the unfamiliar little brown purse in her hand, to the snub-nosed, grimy face of the young man running along the track, then she caught her breath.

"Why,—" she cried unsteadily, "yes—yes, it's my purse."

Phelan loosened his hold on the railing and had only time to scramble breathlessly up the bank before the down train, the train for Nashville which was to have been his, whizzed past.

He watched it regretfully as it slowed up at the station, then almost immediately pulled out again for the south, carrying his hopes with it.

"Corporal," said Phelan, to the dog, who had looked upon the whole episode as a physical-culture exercise indulged in for his special bene-

fit, "a noble act of charity is never to be regretted, but wasn't I the original gun, not to wait for the change?"

His lack of business method seemed to weigh upon him, and he continued to apologize to Corporal:

"It was so sudden, you know, Corp. Couldn't see a lady ditched, when I had a bit of stuffed leather in my pocket. And two hundred miles to Nashville! Well I'll—be—jammed!"

He searched in his trousers pockets and found a dime in one and a hole in the other. It was an old trick of his to hide a piece of money in time of prosperity, and then discover it in the blackness of adversity.

He held the dime out ruefully: "That's punk and plaster for supper, but we'll have to depend on a hand-out for breakfast. And, Corp," he added apologetically, "you know I told you we was going to ride regular like gentlemen? Well, I've been compelled to change my plans. We are going to turf it twelve miles down to the watering tank, and sit out a couple

of dances till the midnight freight comes along. If a side door Pullman ain't convenient, I'll have to go on the bumpers, then what'll become of you, Mr. Corporal Harrihan?"

The coming ordeal cast no shadow over Corporal. He was declaring his passionate devotion, by wild tense springs at Phelan's face, seeking in vain to overcome the cruel limitation of a physiognomy that made kissing well-nigh impossible.

Phelan picked up his small bundle and started down the track with the easy, regular swing of one who has long since gaged the distance of railroad ties. But his step lacked its usual buoyancy, and he forgot to whistle. Mr. Harrihan was undergoing the novel experience of being worried. Of course he would get to Nashville,—if the train went, *he* could go,—but the prospect of arriving without decent clothes and with no money to pay for a lodging, did not in the least appeal to him. He thought with regret of his well-laid plans: an early arrival, a Turkish bath, the purchase of a new outfit, instalment at a good hotel, then—presentation at

the fraternity headquarters of Mr. Phelan Harrihan, Gentleman for a Night. He could picture it all, the dramatic effect of his entrance, the yell of welcome, the buzz of questions, and the evasive, curiosity-enkindling answers which he meant to give. Then the banquet, with its innumerable courses of well-served food, the speeches and toasts, and the personal ovation that always followed Mr. Harrihan's unique contribution.

Oh! he couldn't miss it! Providence would interfere in his behalf, he knew it would, it always did. "Give me my luck, and keep your lucre!" was a saying of Phelan's, quoted by brother hoboes from Maine to the Gulf.

All the long afternoon he tramped the ties, with Corporal at his heels. As dusk came on the clouds that had been doing picket duty, joined the regiment on the horizon which slowly wheeled and charged across the sky. Phelan scanned the heavens with an experienced weather eye, then began to look for a possible shelter from the coming shower. On either side, the fields stretched away in undulating

lines, with no sign of a habitation in sight. A dejected old scare-crow, and a tumble-down shed in the distance were the only objects that presented themselves.

Turning up his coat-collar Phelan made a dash for the shed, but the shower overtook him half-way. It was not one of your gentle little summer showers, that patter on the shingles waking echoes underneath; it was a large and instantaneous breakage in the celestial plumbing that let gallons of water down Phelan's back, filling his pockets, hat brim, and shoes and sending a dashing cascade down Corporal's oblique profile.

"Float on your back, Corp, and pull for the shore!" laughed Phelan as he landed with a spring under the dilapidated shed. "Cheer up, old pard; you look as if all your past misdeeds had come before you in your drowning hour."

Corporal, shivering and unhappy, crept under cover, and dumbly demanded of Phelan what he intended to do about it.

"Light a blaze, sure," said Phelan, "and lin-

ger here in the air of the tropics till the midnight freight comes along."

Scraping together the old wood and débris in the rear of the shed, and extricating with some difficulty a small tin match-box from his saturated clothes, he knelt before the pile and used all of his persuasive powers to induce it to ignite.

At the first feeble blaze Corporal's spirits rose so promptly that he had to be restrained.

"Easy there! Corp," cautioned Phelan. "A fire's like a woman, you can't be sure of it too soon. And, dog alive, stop wagging your tail, don't you see it makes a draft?"

The fire capriciously would, then it wouldn't. A tiny flame played tantalizingly along the top of a stick only to go sullenly out when it reached the end. Match after match was sacrificed to the cause, but at last, down deep under the surface, there was a steady, reassuring, cheerful crackle that made Phelan sit back on his heels, and remark complacently:

"They most generally come around, in the end!"

In five minutes the fire was burning bright, Corporal was dreaming of meaty bones in far fence corners, and Phelan, less free from the incumbrances of civilization, was divesting himself of his rain-soaked garments.

From one of the innumerable pockets of his old cutaway coat he took a comb and brush and clothes-brush, and carefully deposited them before the fire. Then from around his neck he removed a small leather case, hung by a string and holding a razor. His treasured toilet articles thus being cared for, he turned his attention to the contents of his dripping bundle. A suit of underwear and a battered old copy of Eli Perkins were ruefully examined, and spread out to dry.

The fire, while it lasted, was doing admirable service, but the wood supply was limited, and Phelan saw that he must take immediate advantage of the heat. How to dry the underwear which he wore was the question which puzzled him, and he wrestled with it for several moments before an inspiration came.

"I'll borrow some duds from the scarecrow!"

he said half aloud, and went forth immediately to execute his idea.

The rain had ceased, but the fields were still afloat, and Phelan waded ankle deep through the slush grass, to where the scarecrow raised his threatening arms against the twilight sky.

"Beggars and borrowers shouldn't be choosers," said Phelan, as he divested the figure of its ragged trousers and coat, "but I have a strong feeling in my mind that these habiliments ain't going to become me. Who's your tailor, friend?"

The scarecrow, reduced now to an old straw hat and a necktie, maintained a dignified and oppressive silence.

"Well, he ain't on to the latest cut," continued Phelan, wringing the water out of the coat. "But maybe these here is your pajamas? Don't tell me I disturbed you after you'd retired for the night? Very well then, aurevoy."

With the clothes under his arm he made his way back to the shed, and divesting himself of his own raiment he got into his borrowed property.

By this time the fire had died down, and the place was in semi-darkness. Phelan threw on a handful of sticks and, as the blaze flared up, he caught his first clear sight of his newly acquired clothes. They were ragged and weather-stained, and circled about with broad, unmistakable stripes.

"Well, I'll be spiked!" said Phelan, vastly amused. "I wouldn't 'a' thought it of a nice, friendly scarecrow like that! Buncoed me, didn't he? Well, feathers don't always make the jail-bird. Wonder what poor devil wore 'em last? Peeled out of 'em in this very shed, like as not. Well, they'll serve my purpose all right, all right."

He took off his shoes, placed them under his head for a pillow, lit a short cob pipe, threw on fresh wood, and prepared to wait for his clothes to dry.

Meanwhile the question of the banquet revolved itself continually in his mind. This time to-morrow night, the preparations would be in full swing. Instead of being hungry, half naked, and chilled, he might be in a luxurious

club-house dallying with caviar, stuffed olives, and Benedictine. All that lay between him and bliss were two hundred miles of railroad ties and a decent suit of clothes!

"Wake up, Corp; for the love of Mike be sociable!" cried Phelan when the situation became too gloomy to contemplate. "Ain't that like a dog now? Hold your tongue when I'm longing for a word of kindly sympathy an' encouragement, and barking your fool head off once we get on the freight. Much good it'll be doing us to get to Nashville in this fix, but we'll take our blessings as they come, Corp, and just trust to luck that somebody will forget to turn 'em off. I know when I get to the banquet there'll be one other man absent. That's Bell of Terre Haute. Him and me is always in the same boat, he gets ten thousand a year and ain't got the nerve to spend it, and I get fifteen a month, and ain't got the nerve to keep it! Poor old Bell."

Corporal, roused from his slumbers, sniffed inquiringly at the many garments spread about the fire, yawned, turned around several times in

dog fashion, then curled up beside Phelan, signifying by his bored expression that he hadn't the slightest interest in the matter under discussion.

Gradually the darkness closed in, and the fire died to embers. It would be four hours before the night freight slowed up at the water tank, and Phelan, tired from his long tramp, and drowsy from the heat and the vapor rising from the drying clothes, shifted the shoe-buttons from under his left ear, and drifted into dreamland.

How long he slept undisturbed, only the scarecrow outside knew. He was dimly aware, in his dreams, of subdued sounds and, by and by, the sounds formed themselves into whispered words and, still half asleep, he listened.

"I thought we'd find him along here. This is the road they always take," a low voice was saying; "you and Sam stand here, John and me'll tackle him from this side. He'll put up a stiff fight, you bet."

Phelan opened his eyes, and tried to remember where he was.

"Gosh! look at that bulldog!" came another whisper, and at the same moment Corporal jumped to his feet, growling angrily.

As he did so, four men sprang through the opening of the shed, and seized Phelan by the arms and legs.

"Look out there," cried one excitedly; "don't let him escape; here's the handcuffs."

"But here," cried Phelan, "what's up; what you doing to me?"

By this time Corporal, thoroughly roused, made a vicious lunge at the nearest man. The next minute there was a sharp report of a pistol, and the bull-terrier went yelping and limping out into the night.

"You coward!" cried Phelan, struggling to rise, "if you killed that dog—"

"Get those shackles on his legs," shouted one of the men. "Is the wagon ready, Sam? Take his legs there, I've got his head. Leave the truck here, we've got to drive like sand to catch that train!"

After being dragged to the road and thrown into a spring wagon, Phelan found himself lying

on his back, jolting over a rough country road, his three vigilant captors sitting beside him with pistols in hand.

Any effort on his part to explain or seek information was promptly and emphatically discouraged. But in time he gathered, from the bits let fall by his captors, that he was an escaped convict, of a most desperate character, for whom a reward was offered, and that he had been at large twenty-four hours.

In vain did he struggle for a hearing. Only once did he get a response to his oft-repeated plea of innocence. It was when he told how he had come by the clothes he had on. For once Phelan got a laugh when he did not relish it.

"Got 'em off a scarecrow, did you?" said the man at his head, when the fun had subsided; "say, I want to be 'round when you tell that to the Superintendent of the Penitentiary—I ain't heard him laugh in ten years!"

So, in the face of such unbelief, Phelan lapsed into silence and gloom. What became of him concerned him less, at the moment, than the fate of Corporal, and the thought of the faithful little

beast wounded and perhaps dying out there in the fields, made him sick at heart.

Just as they came in sight of the lights of the station, the whistle of the freight was heard down the track and the horses were beaten to a gallop.

Phelan was hurried from the wagon into an empty box car, with his full guard in attendance. As the train pulled out he heard a little whimper beside him and there, panting for breath after his long run, and with one ear hanging limp and bloody, cowered Corporal. Phelan's hands were not at his disposal, but even if they had been it is doubtful if he would have denied Corp the joy for once of kissing him.

Through the rest of the night the heavy cars rumbled over the rails, and the men took turn about sleeping and guarding the prisoner. Only once did Phelan venture another question:

"Say, you sports, you don't mind telling me where you are taking me, do you?"

"Listen at his gaff!" said one. "He'll know all right when he gets to Nashville."

Phelan sent such a radiant smile into the

darkness that it threatened to reveal itself. Then he slipped his encircled wrists about Corporal's body and giving him a squeeze whispered:

"It's better'n the bumpers, Corp."

At the Penitentiary next day there was consternation and dismay when instead of the desperate criminal, who two days before had scaled the walls and dropped to freedom, an innocent little Irishman was presented, whose only offense apparently was in having donned, temporarily, the garb of crime.

As the investigation proceeded, Phelan found it expedient, to become excessively indignant. That an American citizen, strolling harmlessly through the fields of a summer evening, and being caught in a shower, should attempt to dry his clothes in an unused shed, and find himself attacked and bound, and hurried away without his belongings to a distant city, was an inconceivable outrage. If a shadow of doubt remained as to his identity, a score of prominent gentlemen in the city would be able to identify him. He named them, and added that he was

totally unable to hazard a guess as to what form their resentment of his treatment would assume.

The authorities looked grave. Could Mr. Harrihan remember just what articles he had left behind? Mr. Harrihan could. A suit of clothes, a pair of shoes, a hat, a toilet set, and a small sum of money; "the loss of which," added Phelan with a fine air of indifference, "are as nothing compared to the indignity offered to my person."

Would the gentleman be satisfied if the cost of these articles, together with the railroad fare back to Lebanon Junction be paid him? The gentleman, after an injured pause, announced that he would.

And thus it was that Mr. Phelan Harrihan, in immaculate raiment, presented himself at the Sixth Annual Reunion of the Alpha Delta fraternity and, with a complacent smile encircling a ten-cent cigar, won fresh laurels by recounting, with many adornments, the adventures of the previous night.

"POP"

"POP"

THE gloomy corridor in the big Baltimore hospital was still and deserted save for a nurse who sat at a flat-topped desk under a green lamp mechanically transferring figures from one chart to another. It was the period of quiet that usually precedes the first restless stirring of the sick at the breaking of dawn. The silence was intense as only a silence can be that waits momentarily for an interrupting sound.

Suddenly it came in a prolonged, imperative ring of the telephone bell. So insistent was the call that the nurse's hand closed over the transmitter long before the burr ceased. The office was notifying Ward B that an emergency case had been brought in and an immediate operation was necessary.

With prompt efficiency the well-ordered machinery for saving human life was put in mo-

tion. Soft-footed nurses emerged from the shadows and moved quickly about, making necessary arrangements. A trim, comely woman, straight of feature and clear of eye, gave directions in low decisive tones. When the telephone rang the second time she answered it.

"Yes, Office," she said, "this is Miss Fletcher. They are not going to operate? Too late? I see. Very well. Send the patient up to No. 16. Everything is ready."

Even as she spoke the complaining creak of the elevator could be heard, and presently two orderlies appeared at the end of the corridor bearing a stretcher.

Beside it, with head erect and jaw set, strode a strangely commanding figure. Six feet two he loomed in the shadows, a gaunt, raw-boned old mountaineer. On his head was a tall, wide-brimmed hat and in his right hand he carried a bulky carpet sack. The left sleeve of his long-tailed coat hung empty to the elbow. The massive head with its white flowing beard and hawk-like face, the beaked nose and fierce, deep-set eyes, might have served as a model for Michael

Angelo when he modeled his immortal Moses.

As the orderlies passed through the door of No. 16 and lowered the stretcher, the old man put down his carpet sack and grimly watched the nurse uncover the patient. Under the worn homespun coverlet, stained with the dull dyes of barks and berries, lay an emaciated figure, just as it had been brought into the hospital. One long coarse garment covered it, and the bare feet with their prominent ankle bones and the large work-hardened hands might have belonged to either a boy or a girl.

"Take that thar head wrappin' off!" ordered the old man peremptorily.

A nurse carefully unwound the rough woolen scarf and as she did so a mass of red hair fell across the pillow, hair that in spite of its matted disorder showed flashes of gleaming gold.

"We'll get her on the bed," a night nurse said to an assistant. "Put your arm under her knees. Don't jar the stretcher!"

Before the novice could obey another and a stronger arm was thrust forward.

"Stand back thar, some of you-uns," com-

manded a loud voice, "I'll holp move Sal myself."

In vain were protests from nurses and orderlies alike, the old mountaineer seemed bent on making good use of his one arm and with quick dexterity he helped to lift her on the bed.

"Now, whar's the doctor?" he demanded, standing with feet far apart and head thrown back.

The doctor was at the desk in the corridor, speaking to Miss Fletcher in an undertone:

"We only made a superficial examination down-stairs," he was saying, "but it is evidently a ruptured appendix. If she's living in a couple of hours I may be able to operate. But it's ten to one she dies on the table."

"Who are they, and where did they come from?" Miss Fletcher asked curiously.

"Their name is Hawkins, and they are from somewhere in the Kentucky mountains. Think of his starting with her in that condition! He can't read or write; it's the first time he has ever been in a city. I am afraid he's going to

prove troublesome. You'd better get him out of there as soon as possible."

But anyone, however mighty in authority, who proposed to move Jeb Hawkins when he did not choose to be moved reckoned unknowingly. All tactics were exhausted from suggestion to positive command, and the rules of the hospital were quoted in vain.

In the remote regions where Jeb lived there were no laws to break. Every man's home was his stronghold, to be protected at the point of a pistol. He was one of the three million people of good Anglo-Saxon stock who had been stranded in the highlands when the Cumberland Mountains dammed the stream of humanity that swept westward through the level wilderness. Development had been arrested so long in Jeb and his ancestors that the outside world, its interests and its mode of living, was a matter of supreme and profound indifference. A sudden and unprecedented emergency had driven him to the "Settlements." His girl had developed an ailment that baffled the skill of the

herb doctors; so, following one bit of advice after another, he had finally landed in Baltimore. And now that the terrible journey was ended and Sal was in the hands of the doctor who was to work the cure, the wholly preposterous request was made of him that he abandon her to her fate!

With dogged determination he sat beside the bed, and chewed silently and stolidly through the argument.

"You gals mought ez well save yer wind," he announced at last. "Ef Sal stays, I stay. Ef I go, Sal goes. We ain't axin' favors of nobody."

He was so much in the way during the necessary preparations for the possible operation that finally Miss Fletcher was appealed to. She was a woman accustomed to giving orders and to having them obeyed; but she was also a woman of tact. Ten minutes of valuable time were spent in propitiating the old man before she suggested that he come with her into the corridor while the nurses straightened the room. A few minutes later she returned, smiling:

"I've corralled him in the linen closet," she whispered; "he is unpacking his carpet sack as if he meant to take up his abode with us."

"I am afraid," said the special nurse, glancing toward the bed, "he won't have long to stay. How do you suppose he ever got her here?"

"I asked him. He said he drove her for three days in an ox-cart along the creek bottom until they got to Jackson. Then he told the ticket agent to send them to the best hospital the train ran to. Neither of them had ever seen a train before. It's a miracle she's lived this long."

"Does he realize her condition?"

"I don't know. I suppose I ought to tell him that the end may come at any time."

But telling him was not an easy matter as Miss Fletcher found when she joined him later in the linen closet. He was busy spreading his varied possessions along the shelves on top of the piles of immaculate linen, stopping now and then to refresh himself with a bite of salt pork and some corn pone that had been packed for

days along with Sally's shoes and sunbonnet and his own scanty wardrobe.

"I suppose you know," Miss Fletcher began gently, trying not to show her chagrin at the state of the room, "that your daughter is in a very serious condition."

He looked at her sharply. "Shucks! Sal'll pull through," he said with mingled defiance and alarm. "You ain't saw her afore in one of them spells. Besides, hit meks a difference when a gal's paw and grandpaw and great-grandpaw was feud-followers. A feud-follower teks more killin' then ordinary folks. Her maw was subjec' to cramp colic afore her."

"But this isn't cramp colic," Miss Fletcher urged, "it's her appendix, and it wasn't taken in time."

"Well, ain't they goin' to draw it?" he asked irritably. "Ain't that whut we're here fer?"

"Yes; but you don't understand. The doctor may decide *not* to operate."

The old man's face wore a puzzled look, then his lips hardened:

"Mebbe hit's the money thet's a-worryin'

him. You go tell him that Jeb Hawkins pays ez he goes! I got pension money sewed in my coat frum the hem clean up to the collar. I hain't askin' none of you to cure my gal fer nothin'!"

Miss Fletcher laid her hand on his arm. It was a shapely hand as well as a kindly one.

"It isn't a question of money," she said quietly, "it's a question of life or death. There is only a slight chance that your daughter will live through the day."

Someone tapped at the door and Miss Fletcher, after a whispered consultation, turned again to the old man:

"They have decided to take the chance," she said hurriedly. "They are carrying her up now. You stay here, and I will let you know as soon as it is over."

"Whar they fetching her to?" he demanded savagely.

"To the operating-room."

"You take me thar!"

"But you can't go, Mr. Hawkins. No one but the surgeons and nurses can be with her.

Besides, the nurse who was just here said she had regained consciousness, and it might excite her to see you."

She might as well have tried to stop a mountain torrent. He brushed past her and was making his way to the elevator before she had ceased speaking. At the open door of the operating-room on the fourth floor he paused. On a long white table lay the patient, a white-clad doctor on either side of her, and a nurse in the background sorting a handful of gleaming instruments. With two strides the old man reached the girl's side.

"Sal!" he said fiercely, bending over her, "air ye wuss?"

Her dazed eyes cleared slightly.

"I dunno, Pop," she murmured feebly.

"Ye ain't fixin' to die, air ye?" he persisted.

"I dunno, Pop."

"Don't you let 'em skeer you," he commanded sternly. "You keep on a-fightin'. Don't you dare give up. Sal, do you hear me?"

The girl's wavering consciousness steadied, and for a moment the challenge that the old man

flung at death was valiantly answered in her pain-racked eyes.

For an hour and a half the surgeons worked. The case, critical enough at best, was greatly complicated by the long delay. Twice further effort seemed useless, and it was only by the prompt administration of oxygen that the end was averted. During the nerve-racking suspense Pop not only refused to leave the room, he even refused to stand back from the table. With keen, suspicious eyes he followed every movement of the surgeons' hands. Only once did he speak out, and that was in the beginning, to an interne who was administering the anæsthetic:

"Lift that funnel, you squash-headed fool!" he thundered; "don't you see hit's marking of her cheek?"

When the work was finished and the unconscious patient had been taken down to her ward, Pop still kept his place beside her. With his hand on her pulse he watched her breathing, watched the first faint quivering of her lids, the restlessness that grew into pain and later into

agony. Hour after hour he sat there and passed with her through that crucifixion that follows some capital operations.

On his refusal at luncheon time to leave the bedside Miss Fletcher ignored the rules and sent him a tray; but when night came and he still refused to go, she became impatient.

"You can't stay in here to-night, Mr. Hawkins," she said firmly. "I have asked one of the orderlies, who lives nearby, to take you home with him. We can send for you if there is any change. I must insist that you go now."

"Ain't I made it cl'ar from the start," cried Pop angrily, "thet I ain't a-goin' to be druv out? You-uns kin call me muley-headed or whutever you've a mind to. Sal's always stood by me, and by golly, I'm a-goin' to stand by Sal!"

His raised voice roused the patient, and a feeble summons brought Miss Fletcher to the bedside.

"Say," plead the girl faintly, "don't rile Pop. He's the—fightenest man—in—Breathitt—when his blood's—up."

"All right, dear," said Miss Fletcher, with a soothing hand on the hot brow; "he shall do as he likes."

During that long night the girl passed from one paroxysm of pain to another with brief intervals of drug-induced sleep. During the quiet moments the nurse snatched what rest she could; but old Jeb Hawkins stuck to his post in the straight-backed chair, never nodding, never relaxing the vigilance of his watch. For Pop was doing sentry duty, much as he had done it in the old days of the Civil War, when he had answered Lincoln's first call for volunteers and given his left arm for his country.

But the enemy to-night was mysterious, crafty, one that might come in the twinkling of an eye, and a sentry at seventy is not what he was at twenty-two. When the doctor arrived in the morning he found the old man haggard with fatigue.

"This won't do, Mr. Hawkins," he said kindly; "you must get some rest."

"Be she goin' to die?" Pop demanded, steadying himself by a chair.

"It is too soon to tell," the doctor said evasively; "but I'll say this much, her pulse is better than I expected. Now, go get some sleep."

Half an hour later a strange rumbling sound puzzled the nurses in Ward B. It came at regular intervals, rising from a monotonous growl to a staccato, then dying away in a plaintive diminuendo. It was not until one of the nurses needed clean sheets that the mystery was explained. On the floor of the linen closet, stretched on his back with his carpet sack under his head and his empty sleeve across his chest, lay Pop!

From that time on the old mountaineer became a daily problem to Ward B. It is true, he agreed in time to go home at night with the orderly; but by six in the morning he was sitting on the hospital steps, impatiently awaiting admission. The linen closet was still regarded by him as his private apartment, to which he repaired at such times as he could not stay in Sally's room, and refreshed himself with the luncheon he brought with him each day.

During the first week, when the girl's life

hung in the balance, he was granted privileges which he afterward refused to relinquish. The hospital confines, after the freedom of the hills, chafed him sorely. As the days grew warmer he discarded his coat, collar, and at times his shoes.

"I 'low I'm goin' to tek Sal home next week!" became his daily threat.

But the days and weeks slipped by, and still the girl lay with a low, consuming fever, and still Pop watched by her side, showing her no affection by word or gesture but serving her and anticipating her every want with a thoroughness that left little for the nurses to do.

In some way Miss Fletcher had gained his confidence. To her he intrusted the bills which he ripped from his coat at the end of each week with the instruction that she "pay off them boys down in the office fa'r an' squar', but not to 'low 'em to cheat her." It may have been her growing interest in the invalid that won his favor, for she came in often to chat awhile with Sally and sometimes brought up a handful of flowers to brighten the sick room.

"She's getting better," she said one morning as she held the girl's big bony hand and looked down at the thin bright face in its frame of shining hair. "We'll have her sitting up now before long."

Pop's whole aspect brightened.

"Ef Sal onct begins to git well, can't none of 'em beat her," he said proudly.

"Have you any other children?" Miss Fletcher asked.

"Lord, yes," said Pop, "heaps of 'em. Thar's Ted an' Larkin, an' Gus,—they wuz all kilt in feud fights. An' Burt an' Jim,—they're in jail in Jackson fer moonshinin'. Four more died when they wuz babies. An' they ain't nary a one at home now but jes' Sal."

"How old is she?"

"Seventeen or eighteen, mebbe."

"And she tells me she has never been to school."

"Thar warn't no needcessity," said Pop complacently, taking a long twist of tobacco from his pocket. "Sal don't need no larnin'. She's

pearter then most gals thet's got book sense. You show me ary one of these gals round here thet kin spin an' weave the cloth to mek ther own dresses, thet kin mold candles, an' mek soap, an' hoe terbaccy, an' handle a rifle good ez a man."

"But, Mr. Hawkins," insisted Miss Fletcher, "there are better things than those for us to learn. Haven't you ever felt the need of an education yourself?"

Pop looked at her suspiciously: "Look a-here, young woman. I'm nigh on to seventy. I never hed a doctor but onct in my life, an' then he chopped my arm off when it might hev got well whar it wuz. I kin plow, an' fell trees, an' haul wood. Thar ain't a log-rollin' ner a house-raisin' in our neck of the woods thet Jeb Hawkins ain't sent fer. I kin h'ist a barrel with the best of 'em, and shake up Ole Dan Tucker ez peart ez the next one. Now how about yer scholards? This here horspittle is full of 'em. Pale-faced, spindly-legged, nerve-jerking young fellows thet has spent ther fust

twenty years gittin' larnin', an' ther next twenty gittin' over hit. Me an' Sal will keep to the open!"

But Sally was not so confident. As her strength began to return she took a growing interest in all that went on around her, asking eager, intelligent questions and noting with wistful curiosity the speech and manners of the nurses who served her. She was a raw recruit from Nature, unsophisticated, illiterate. Under a bondage of poverty and drudgery she had led her starved life in the mountain fastnesses; but now she had opened her eyes on a new and unexpected world.

"How do you go about gittin' a larnin'?" she ventured at last to ask one of the friendly nurses. "Can't you fetch me up some of them thar picter books?"

For hours after this she pored over her new treasures, until one day Miss Fletcher brought her a primer, and the seventeen-year-old girl grappled for the first time with the alphabet. After that she was loath to have the book out of her hand, going painfully and slowly over the

lessons, mastering each in turn with patient perseverance.

Pop viewed this proceeding with disfavor. He seemed to sense the entering wedge that was to separate her from him. His pride in her accomplishment was overshadowed by his jealousy, and when she was able to read a whole page and attempted to explain the intricate process to him, he was distinctly cast down. He left the hospital that afternoon for the first time, and was gone until dusk. When he returned he carried a bunch of faded wild flowers that he had tramped two miles in the country to get for his girl.

May dragged into June, and still they were kept at the hospital. The old man became as restless as a caged animal; he paced the corridors for hours at a time and his eyes grew furtive and defiant. He, who had lived out of sight of the smoke from his nearest neighbor's chimneys, who had spent his life in the vast, still solitudes of the hills, was incredibly lonely here among his fellow men.

"If Pop has to stay here much longer, I'm

afraid he'll smash the furniture," said the night nurse who, like everybody else in the ward, had grown interested in the old man. "He packs his things every morning before the doctor comes, only to unpack them after he leaves."

"The confinement is telling on him," said Miss Fletcher. "I wish for his sake they could start home to-day. But I do hate to see Sally go! The girl is getting her first taste of civilization, and I've never seen anyone so eager to learn. We have to take the books away from her every day, and when she can't study she begs to be allowed to roll bandages. The third day she sat up she wanted to help nurse the other patients.

"I am afraid we have spoiled her for hoeing tobacco, and planting corn," said the night nurse.

"I hope so," Miss Fletcher answered fervently.

It was nearly the last of June when the doctor dismissed his patient. "This doesn't mean that she is well," he warned Pop. "You will have

to be careful of her for a long time. She has worked too hard for a growing girl, and she's not as strong now as she was."

"She will be!" Pop responded confidently. "That thar gal is made outen iron! Her maw was afore her. Liza wuz my third wife, an' she'd borned six or seven children, when she died at thirty-five, an', by Joshuy, she'd never once hed a doctor in all her life!"

Pop's joy over their dismissal was slightly dimmed by Sally's reception of the news. He saw her draw a long breath and bite her lips; then he saw what he had never seen since she was a baby, two large tears gather slowly in her eyes and roll down on the pillow. He watched them in amazement.

"Sal, whut ails ye?" he asked anxiously, after the doctor was gone.

"I want to git a larnin'!" she broke out. "I don't want to go back to the hills."

Instantly the old man's face, which had been tender, hardened to a mask of fury.

"That passel of fool women's been workin' on ye," he cried hoarsely, "larnin', larnin', thet's

all they know. Ain't the Fork good enough fer ye? Ain't the cabin whar yer paw, an' yer grandpaw, an' yer great-grandpaw was borned good enough for ye?"

"Yes, Pop, yes!" she gasped, terrified at the storm she had raised. "I'm a-goin' back with you. Don't tek on so, Pop, I'm a-goin'!"

But the tempest was raging, and the old man got up and strode angrily up and down the small room, filling the air with his indignation.

"I should say you *wuz* goin' back! I'd like to see any of 'em try to keep you. They'd like to make one o' them dressed-up doll women outen you! You're goin' back with me to the Fork, an' ef thar's ever any more nussin' er doctorin' to do, I'm a-goin' to do hit. I've nussed three women on their deathbeds, an' when your time comes I 'low I kin handle you too."

Then his mood changed suddenly, and he sat down by the bed.

"Sal," he said almost persuasively, "you'll git over this here foolishness. Ag'in' fall you'll be a-cappin corn, an' a-roastin' sweet pertatoes,

an' singin' them ole ballarts along with the Hicks gals, an' Cy West, an' Bub Holly. An' I'll tote you behind me on the beast over the Ridge to the Baptist Meetin' House the very next feet-washin' they hev. Jes' think how good hit's goin' to be to see the sun a-risin' over Ole Baldy, an' to hev room to stretch an' breathe in. Seems ez if I hain't been able to git my lungs full of wind sense I left Jackson."

"I know it, Pop," Sally said miserably. "You growed old in the hills afore you ever seen the Settlements. But sence I got a sight of whut folks is a-doin' down here, 'pears like I can't be reconciled to goin' back. 'Tain't the work back home, nor the lonesomeness, tho' the Lord knows the only folks thet ever does pass is when they're totin' deads down the creek bottom. Hit's the feelin' of bein' shet off from my chanct. Ef I could git a larnin' I wouldn't ask nothin' better then to go back an' pass it along. When I see these here gals a-larnin' how to holp the sick, an' keer fer babies, an' doctor folks, I lay here an' steddy 'bout all the good I could do back home ef I only knowed how."

"You do know how," Pop declared vociferously; "ain't you bin a-lookin' after folks thet's ailin' around the Fork fer a couple of years er more? Ez fer these new-fangled doctorin's, they won't nary one ov 'em do the good yarbs will. I'd ruther trust bitter-goldenseal root to cure a ailment than all the durn physic in this here horspittle. I ben a-studyin' these here doctors, an' I don't take much stock in 'em; instid of workin' on a organ thet gets twisted, they ups and draws hit. Now the Lord A'mighty put thet air pertickler thing in you fer some good reason, an' ther's bound to be a hitch in the machinery when hit's took out. Hit's a marvel to me some of these here patients ain't a amblin' round on all fours from what's been did to their insides!"

"But think whut the doctor did fer me," urged Sally.

"I ain't fergittin'," Pop said suddenly, "an' I've paid 'em fer hit. But ef they calkerlate on yer takin' root here, they're treein' the wrong possum. You're a-goin' home along o' me tomorrow."

That afternoon he left the hospital, and several hours later was seen walking up Monument Street with his arm full of bundles.

"I believe he's been buying clothes to take Sally home in!" said one of the nurses, who was watching him from an upper window. "He asked me this morning if I knew a place where he could buy women's togs."

"It's a shame he won't let the girl stay," said Miss Fletcher. "I have been talking to the superintendent, and she is quite willing to let her do light work around the hospital and pick up what training she can. I should be glad enough to look after her, and there's a good night school two blocks over."

"Why don't you talk to the old man?" urged the nurse. "You are the only one who has ever been able to do anything with him. Perhaps you could make him see what an injustice he is doing the girl."

"I believe I'll try," said Miss Fletcher.

The next morning, when she came on duty, she found Sally's bed the repository of a strange assortment of wearing apparel. A calico dress

of pronounced hue, a large lace jabot, and a small pair of yellow kid gloves were spread out for inspection.

"I knowed they wuz too leetle," Pop was saying, as he carefully smoothed the kid fingers, "but I 'lowed you could kerry 'em in yer hand."

There was an unusual eagerness in his hard face, an evident desire to make up to Sally in one way for what he was depriving her of in another. He was more talkative than at any time since coming to the hospital, and he dilated with satisfaction on the joys that awaited their home-coming.

"May I have a little talk with you before you go?" asked Miss Fletcher.

He flashed on her a quick look of suspicion, but her calm, impassive face told him nothing. She was a pretty woman, and Pop had evidently recognized the fact from the start.

"Wal, I'll come now," he said, rising reluctantly; "but, Sal, you git yer clothes on an' be ready to start time I git back. I ain't anxious to stay round these here diggin's no longer'n need be. Besides, that thar railroad car mought

take a earlier start. You be ready ag'in I git back."

For an hour and a quarter Miss Fletcher was shut up in the linen closet with the old man. What arguments and persuasions she brought to bear are not known. Occasionally his voice could be heard in loud and angry dissent, but when at last they emerged he looked like some old king of the jungle that has been captured and tamed. His shoulders drooped, his one arm hung limply by his side, and his usually restless eyes were bent upon the floor.

Without a word he strode back to the room where Sally in her misfit clothes was waiting for him.

"Come along o' me, Sal," he commanded sternly as he picked up his carpet sack. "Leave your things whar they be."

Silently they passed out of the ward, down the stairway, through the long vaultlike corridor to the superintendent's room. Once there he flung back his rusty coat and ripped the last bill but one from its hiding place.

"That thar is fer my gal," he said defiantly

to the superintendent. "She'll git one the fust day of every month. Give her the larnin' she's so hell-bent on, stuff her plumb full on it. An' ef you let ennything happen to her"—his brows lowered threateningly—"I'll come back an' blow yer whole blame' horspittle into eternity!"

"Pop!" Sally pleaded, "Pop!"

But his emotions were at high tide and he did not heed her. Pushing her roughly aside, he strode back to the entrance hall, and was about to pick up his carpet sack when his gaze was suddenly arrested by the great marble figure that bends its thorn-crowned head in pity over the unhappy and the pain-racked mortals that pass beneath its outstretched hands.

"You ain't goin' to leave me like this, Pop?" begged Sally. "Ef you take it so hard, I'll go back, an' I'll go willin'. Jus' say the word, Pop, an' I'll go!"

The old mountaineer's one hand closed on the girl's bony arm in a tight clasp, his shoulders heaved, and his massive features worked, but his gaze never left the calm, pitying face of the Saviour overhead. He had followed his child

without a tremor into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but at the entrance of this new life, where he must let her go alone, his courage failed and his spirit faltered. His dominant will, hitherto the only law he knew, was in mortal combat with a new and unknown force that for the first time had entered his life.

For several minutes he stood thus, his conflicting passions swaying him, as opposing gales shake a giant forest tree. Then he resolutely loosened his grip on the girl's arm and taking up his burden, without a word or a backward glance, set his face toward the hills, leaving an awkward, wistful girl watching him with her tears only half obscuring the vision that was already dawning for her.

HOODOOED

HOODOOED

GORDON LEE SURRENDER JONES lay upon what he confidently claimed to be his death-bed. Now and again he glanced furtively at the cabin door and listened. Being assured that nobody was coming, he cautiously extricated a large black foot from the bedclothes, and, holding it near the candle, laboriously tied a red string about one of his toes. He was a powerful negro, with a close-cropped bullet-head, a massive bulldog jaw, and a pair of incongruously gentle and credulous eyes.

According to his own diagnosis, he was suffering from "asmy, bronketers, pneumony, grip, diabeters, and old age." The last affliction was hardly possible, as Gordon Lee was probably born during the last days of the Civil War, though he might have been eighty, for all he knew to the contrary. In addition to his ac-

knowledged ailments, there was one he cherished in secret. It was by far the most mysterious and deadly of the lot, a malady to be pondered on in the dark watches of the night, to be treated with weird rites and ceremonies, and to be cured only by some specialist versed in the deepest lore of witchcraft; for Gordon Lee knew beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt that a hoodoo had been laid upon him.

Of course, like most of his race, he had had experiences in this line before; but this was different. In fact, it was no less a calamity than a cricket in his leg. Just how the cricket got into his leg was a matter too deep for human speculation; but the fact that it was there, and that it hopped with ease from knee to ankle, and made excruciating excursions into his five toes, was as patent as the toes themselves.

What complicated the situation for Gordon Lee was that he could not discuss this painful topic with his wife. Amanda Jones had embarked on the higher education, and had long ago thrown overboard her old superstitions. She was not only Queen Mother of the Sisters of

the Order of the Star, and an officer in various church societies, but she was also a cook in the house of Mrs. James Bertram, President of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. The crumbs of wisdom that fell from the lips of the great Mrs. Bertram were carefully preserved by Amanda, and warmed over, with sundry garnishings of her own, for the various colored clubs to which she belonged.

Gordon Lee had succeeded in adorning only three toes when he heard a quick step on the gravel outside and, hastily getting his foot under cover, he settled back on the pillow, closed his eyes, and began laboriously inhaling with a wheeze and exhaling with a groan.

The candle sputtered as the door was flung open, and a small, energetic mulatto woman, twenty years Gordon Lee's junior, bustled into the room.

"Good lan'! but it's hot in heah!" she exclaimed, flinging up a window. "I got a good mind to *nail* this heah window down f'om the top."

"I done open' de door fer a spell dis mawn-

in','' said Gordon Lee, sullenly, pulling the bedclothes tighter about his neck. ''Lettin' in all dis heah night air meks my eyes sore.''

The bedclothes, having thus been drawn up from the bottom of the bed, left the patient's feet exposed, and Amanda immediately spied the string-encircled toes.

''Gordon Lee Surrender Jones,'' she exclaimed indignantly, ''has that there meddlin' ol' Aunt Kizzy been here again?''

Gordon Lee's eyes blinked, and his thick, sullen under lip dropped half an inch lower.

''Ef you think,'' continued Amanda, furiously, ''that I'm a-goin' to keep on a-workin' my fingers to the bone, lak I been doin' fer the past year, a-payin' doctors' bills, an' buyin' medicines fer you, while you lay up in this here bed listenin' to the fool talk of a passel of igneramuses, you's certainly mistaken. Hit's bad enough to have you steddyin' up new ailments ever' day, without folks a-puttin' 'em in yer head. Whut them strings tied on yer toes fer?''

Gordon Lee's wheezing had ceased under his severe mental strain, and now he lay blinking at

the ceiling, utterly unable to give a satisfactory answer.

"Aunt Kizzy jes happen' 'long," he muttered presently. "Ain't no harm in a' ol' frien' passin' de time ob day."

"Whut them *strings* tied on yer toes fer?" repeated Amanda with fearful insistence.

Gordon Lee, pushed to the extreme, and knowing by experience that he was as powerless in the hands of his diminutive wife as an elephant in those of his keeper, weakly capitulated.

"Aunt Kizzy 'low'—I ain't sayin' she's right; I's jes tellin' you whut she *'low'*—Aunt Kizzy 'low' dat, 'cordin' to de symtems, she say',—an' I ain't sayin' I b'lieve her,—but she say' hit looks to her lak I's sufferin' f'om a hoodoo."

"A hoodoo!" Amanda's scorn was unbounded. "Ef it don't beat my time how some of you niggers hang on to them ol' notions. 'Tain't nothin' 't all but ignorant superstition. Ain't I tol' you that a hunderd times?"

"Yes, you done tol' me," said Gordon Lee, putting up a feeble defense. "You all time quoilin' an' runnin' down conjurin' an' bad-

luck signs an' all de *nigger* superstitions; but you's quick 'nough to tek up all dese heah *white* superstitions."

"How you mean?" demanded Amanda.

Gordon Lee, flattered at having any remark of his noticed, proceeded to elaborate.

"I mean all dis heah talk 'bout hits bein' bad luck to sleep wid de windows shet, an' bout flies carrying disease, an' 'bout worms gittin' in de milk ef you leave it settin' roun' unkivered."

"Not worms," corrected Amanda; "*germs.* That ain't no superstition; that's a scientific fac'. They is so little you don't see 'em; but they's there all right. Mis' Bertram says they's ever'where—in the water, in the air, crawlin' up the very walls."

Gordon Lee looked fearfully at the ceiling, as if he expected an immediate attack from that direction.

"I ain't sayin' dey ain't, Amanda. Come to think of hit, seems lak I 'member 'em scrunchin' 'g'inst my teeth when I eats. I ain't sayin' nothin' 't all 'bout white folks superstitions,—I 'spec' dey's true, ebery one ob 'em,—but hit

look' lak you oughtn't to shet yer min' ag'inst de colored signs dat done come down f'om yer maw an' yer paw, an' yer gran'maw an' gran'paw fer back as Adam. I 'spec' Adam hisself was conjured. Lak as not de sarpint done tricked him into regalin' hisself wid dat apple. But I s'pose you'd lay hit on de germs whut was disportin' deyselves on de apple. But dey ain't no use in 'sputin' dat p'int, 'ca'se de fac' remains dat de apple's done et."

"I ain't astin' you to dispute nothin'," cried Amanda, by this time in a high state of indignation. "I'm a-talkin' scientific fac's, an' you're talkin' nigger foolishness. The ignorance jes nachully oozes outen the pores o' your skin."

Gordon Lee, thus arraigned, lay with contracted brows and protruding lips, nursing his wrongs, while Amanda disappeared into the adjoining room, there to vent her wrath on the pots and pans about the stove.

Despite the fact that it was after eight o'clock and she had been on her feet all day, she set about preparing the evening meal for her hus-

band with all the care she had bestowed on the white folks' supper.

Soon the little cabin was filled with the savory odor of bacon, and when the corn batter-cakes began to sizzle promisingly, and she flipped them over dexterously with a fork, Gordon Lee forgot his ill humor, and through the door watched the performance with growing eagerness.

"Git yerself propped up," Amanda called when the cakes were encircled with crisp, brown edges. "I'll git the bread-board to put acrost yer knees. You be eatin' this soup while I dishes up the bacon an' onions. How'd you like to have a little jam along with yer apple-dumplin'?"

Gordon Lee, sitting up in bed with this liberal repast spread on the bread-board across his knees, and his large, bare feet, with their pink adornments, rising like ebony tombstones at the foot of the bed, forgot his grievance.

"Jam!" he repeated. "Well, dat dere Sally Ann Slocum's dumplin's may need jam, er Maria Johnsing's, but dis heah dumplin' is com-

plete in hitself. Ef dey ever was a pusson dat could assemble a' apple-dumplin' so's you swoller hit 'most afore hit gits to yer mouf, dat pusson is you."

Harmony being thus restored, and the patient having emptied all the dishes before him, Amanda proceeded to clear up. Her small, energetic figure moved briskly from one room to the other, and as she worked she sang in a low, chanting tone:

"You got a shoe,
I got a shoe,
All God's children got shoes.
When I git to heaben, gwine try on my shoes,
Gwine walk all over God's heaben, heaben, heaben.
Ever'body 's talkin' 'bout heaben ain't gwine to heaben—
Heaben, heaben, gwine walk all over God's heaben."

But the truce, thus declared, was only temporary. During the long days that Amanda was away at her work, Gordon Lee had nothing to do but lie on his back and think of his ailments. For twenty years he had worked in an iron foundry, where his muscles were as active as his brain was passive. Now that the case

was reversed, the result was disastrous. From an attack of rheumatism a year ago he had developed an amazing number of complaints, all of which finally fell under the head of the dread hoodoo.

Aunt Kizzy, the object of Amanda's special scorn, he held in great reverence. She had been a familiar figure in his mother's chimney-corner when he was a boy, and to doubt her knowledge of charms and conjuring was to him nothing short of heresy. She knew the value of every herb and simple that grew in Hurricane Hollow. She was an adept in getting people into the world and getting them out of it. She was constantly consulted about weaning calves, and planting crops according to the stage of the moon. And for everything in the heavens above and the earth beneath and the waters under the earth she "had a sign."

Since Gordon Lee's illness, she had fallen into the habit of dropping in to sit with him at such hours as Amanda would not be there. She would crouch over the fire, elbows on knees and pipe in mouth, and regale him with hair-raising

tales of "hants" and "sperrits" and the part she had played in exorcising them.

"Dis heah case ob yourn," she said one day, "ain't no ordinary case. I done worked on lizards in de laigs, but I nebber had no 'casion to treat a *cricket* in de laig. Looks lak de cricket is a more persistent animal dan de lizard. 'Sides, ez I signify afore, dis heah case ob yourn ain't no ordinary case."

"Why—why ain't it?" Gordon Lee stammered apprehensively.

Aunt Kizzy lifted a bony black hand, and shook her turbaned head ominously.

"Dey's two kinds ob hoodoos," she said, "de libin' an' de daid. De daid ones is de easiest to lift, 'ca'se dey answers to charms; but nobody can lift a libin' hoodoo 'ceptin' de one dat laid hit on. I been a-steddyin' an' a-steddyin', an' de signs claim dat dis heah hoodoo ob yourn ain't no daid hoodoo."

By this time the whites of Gordon Lee's eyes were largely in evidence, and he raised himself fearfully on his elbow.

"Aunt Kizzy," he whispered hoarsely, "how

am I gwine to fin' out who 't is done conjured me?"

"By de sign ob seben," she answered mysteriously. "I's gwine home an' work hit out, den I come back an' tell yer. Ef my 'spicions am true, dat dis heah is a *libin'* hoodoo, de only power in de earth to tek it off am ter git er bigger trick an' lay on de top ob hit. I'm gwine home now, an' I'll be back inside de hour."

That night when Amanda returned home she found Gordon Lee preoccupied and silent. He ate gingerly of the tempting meal she prepared, and refused to have his bed straightened before he went to sleep.

"Huccome you put yer pillow on the floor?" she asked.

"I ain't believin' in feathers," he answered sullenly; "dey meks me heah things."

In vain Amanda tried to cheer him; she recounted the affairs of the day; she gave him all the gossip of the Order of the Sisters of the Star. He lay perfectly stolid, his horizontal profile resembling a mountain-range the highest peak of which was his under lip.

Finally Amanda's patience wore thin.

"Whut's the matter with you, Gordon Lee Surrender Jones?" she demanded. "Whut you mean by stickin' out yer lip lak a circus camel?"

Now that the opportunity for action had come, he feared to take advantage of it. Amanda, small as she was, looked firm and determined, and he knew by experience that he was no match for her.

" 'Tain't fer you to be astin' *me* whut's de matter," he began significantly. "De glove's on de other han'."

"Whut you 'sinuatin', nigger?" cried Amanda, now thoroughly roused.

"I's tired layin' heah under dis heah spell," complained Gordon Lee. "I knowed all 'long 'twas a hoodoo, but I neber 'spicioned till to-day who was 'sponsible fer hit. Aunt Kizzy tried de test, an', 'fore de Lawd, hit p'inted powerful' near home."

Amanda sank into the one rocking-chair the cabin boasted, and dropped her hands in her lap. Her anger had given place for the moment to sheer amazement.

"Well, if this ain't the beatenest thing I ever heard tell of in all my born days! Do you mean to say that that honery old cross-eyed nigger Kizzy had the audacity to set up before my fire, in my house, an' tell my husband I'd laid a spell on him?"

"Dat's whut de signs p'int to," said Gordon Lee, doggedly.

Amanda rose, and it seemed to him that she towered to the ceiling. With hands on hips and head thrown back, she delivered herself, and her voice rang with suppressed passion.

"Yas, I laid a spell on yer! I laid a spell on yer when I let you quit work, an' lay up in bed wid nothin' to do but to circulate yer symtems. I put a spell on yer when I nuss you an' feed you an' s'port you an' spile the life plumb outen you. I ain't claimin' 't wasn't rheumatism in the fust place, but it's a spell now, all right—a spell I did lay on yer, a spell of laziness pure an' simple!"

After this outburst the relations were decidedly strained in the little cabin at the far end of Hurricane Hollow. Gordon Lee persistently

refused to eat anything his wife cooked for him, depending upon the food that Aunt Kizzy or other neighbors brought in.

To Amanda the humiliation of this was acute. She used every strategy to conciliate him, and at last succeeded by bringing home some pig's feet. His appetite got the better of his resentment, and he disposed of four with evident relish.

With the approach of winter, however, other and graver troubles developed. The rent of the cabin, which had always been promptly paid out of Gordon Lee's wages, had now to come out of Amanda's limited earnings. Two years' joint savings had gone to pay the doctor and the druggist.

Amanda gave up the joys of club life, and began to take in small washings, which she did at night. Gordon Lee, surrounded by every luxury save that of approbation, continued to lie on his back in the white bed and nurse his hallucinations.

" 'Mandy," he said one morning as she was going to work, "wished you'd ast Marse Jim ef

he got a' ol' pair of pants he could spare me."

Her face brightened.

"You fixin' to git up, Honey?" she asked hopefully.

"No, I's jes collectin' ob my grave-clothes," said Gordon Lee. "Dere's a pair ob purple socks in de bottom drawer, an' a b'iled shirt in de wardrobe. But I been layin' heah steddyin' 'bout dat shirt. Hit's got Marse Jim's name on de tail of it, an' s'pose I git to heaben, an' St. Peter he read de name an' look hit up in de jedgment book. He's 'lowable to come to me an' say, 'Huccome you wearin' dat shirt? Dey ain't but one James Bartrum writ down in de book, an' he ain't no colored pusson.' 'Co'se I *could* explain, but I's got 'splainin' 'nough to do when I git to heaben widout dat."

Amanda paused with her hand on the door-knob.

"Marse Jim'll beat you to heaben; that is, ef he don't beat you to the bad place first. You git that idea of dyin' outen yer mind, and you'll git well."

"I can't git well till de hoodoo's lifted. Aunt Kizzy 'lows—"

But the door was slammed before he could finish.

The limit of Amanda's endurance was reached about Christmas-time. One gloomy Sunday afternoon when she had finished the numerous chores that had accumulated during the week, she started for the coal-shed to get an armful of kindling.

Dusk was coming on, and Hurricane Hollow had never seemed more lonesome and deserted. The corn-shocks leaned toward one another as if they were afraid of a common enemy. Somewhere down the road a dog howled dismally.

Amanda resolutely pushed open the door of the shed, and felt her way toward the pile of chips. Suddenly she found her progress blocked by a strange and colossal object. It was an oblong affair, and it stood on one end, which was larger than the other. With growing curiosity she felt its back and sides, and then peered around it to get a front view. What she

saw sent her flying back to the cabin with her mouth open and her limbs shaking.

"Gordon Lee," she cried, "whose coffin is that settin' in our coal-shed?"

The candidate for the next world looked very much embarrassed.

"Well, 'Mandy," he began lamely, "I can't say 'zactly ez hit's any pusson's jes yit. But hit's gwine be mine when de summons comes."

"Where'd you git it at?" demanded his Nemesis.

His eyes shifted guiltily.

"De foundry boss done been heah las' week, an' he gimme some money. I 'lowed I was layin' hit up fer a rainy day."

"An' you mean to tell me," she cried, "that you took that money an' spent it fer a coffin, a white one with shiny handles, an' a satin bolster that'll done be wore out, an' et up by moths, 'fore you ever git a chancet to use it?"

"Couldn't you fix hit up in terbaccy er mothballs ag'in' de time I need hit?" Gordon Lee asked helplessly.

But Amanda was too exasperated this time to

argue the matter. Fifty dollars' worth of coffin in the coal-shed and fifty cents' worth of coal in the bin constituted a situation that demanded her entire attention.

For six months now Gordon Lee had remained in bed, firm in the belief that he could not walk on account of the spell that had been laid upon him. During that time he had come to take a luxurious satisfaction in the interest his case was exciting in the neighborhood. Being in excellent physical condition, he could afford the melancholy joy of playing with the idea of death. He spent hours discussing the details of his funeral, which had assumed in his mind the proportions of a pageant.

Amanda, on the other hand, overworked and anxious, and compelled to forego her lodges and societies, became more and more irascible and depressed. In some subtle way she was aware that the sympathy of the colored community was solidly with Gordon Lee. Nobody now asked her how he was. Nobody came to the cabin when she was there, though it was apparent that visitors were frequent during her ab-

sence. Aunt Kizzy had evidently been busy in the neighborhood.

One night Amanda sat very long over the stove rolling her hair into little wads about the length and thickness of her finger, then tightly wrapping each with a stout bit of cord to take out the kink. When Gordon Lee roused himself now and then to inquire suspiciously what she was doing, she answered with ominous calm.

"Jes steddyin', that's all."

Her meditations evidently resulted in a plan of action, for the next night she came home from her work in a most mysterious and unusual mood. Gordon Lee heard her moving some heavy and cumbersome article across the kitchen floor, then he saw her surreptitiously put something into a tin can before she presented herself at the foot of his bed.

" 'Mandy," he said, anxious to break the silence, and distrusting that subdued look of excitement in her eyes, "did you bring me dat possum, lak you 'lowed you was gwine to?"

Her lips tightened.

"Yes, I got the possum, an' also some apples

fer a dumplin'; but before I lays a stick to the fire I'm goin' to say my say."

Gordon Lee looked at her with consternation. She stood at the foot of his bed as if it were a rostrum, and with an air of detached dignity addressed him as if he had been the whole Order of the Sisters of the Star.

"I done arrive' at a decision," she declared. "I arrive' at it in the watches of the night. I'm goin' to cure you 'cordin' to yer lights an' knowledge. I'm goin' to lif' that spell ef I has to purge my immortal soul to do it."

" 'Mandy," cried Gordon Lee, eagerly, "you mean to say you gwine to remove the hoodoo?"

"I am," she said solemnly. "I'm goin' to draw out all yer miseries fer the rest of yer life, *includin' of the cricket in yer leg.*"

" 'Mandy," he cried again fearfully, "you ain't gwine ter hurt me in no way, is you?"

"Not effen you do as I tell you. But fust of all you got to take the pledge of silence. Whatsomever takes place heah in this cabin to-night ain't never to be revealed till the jedgment-day. Do you swear?"

The big negro, fascinated with the mystery, and deeply impressed with his wife's manner, laid his hand on the Bible and solemnly took the oath.

"Now," she continued impressively, "while I go in the kitchen an' git the supper started, I want you to ease yerse'f outen the bed on to the floor, an' lay with yer head to the north an' your han's outspread, an' yer mind on the heabenly kingdom."

"Air you shore hit ain't gwine hurt me?" again he queried.

"Not if you do 'zactly like I say. Besides," she added dryly, "if it comes to the worst, ain't you ready an' waitin' to go?"

"Yas," agreed Gordon Lee; "but I ain't fixin' to go till I's sent fer."

It took not only time, but courage, for him to follow the prescribed directions. He had for a long time cherished the belief that any exertion would prove fatal; but the prospect of having the hoodoo removed, together with a lively curiosity as to what means Amanda would employ

to remove it, spurred him to persist despite groans, wheezes, and ejaculations.

Once stretched upon the floor, with his head to the north and his arms extended, he encountered a new difficulty: his mind refused to dwell upon the heavenly kingdom. Anxiety as to the treatment he was about to be subjected to alternated with satisfaction at the savory odors that floated in from the kitchen. If the ordeal was uncertain, the reward at least was sure.

After what seemed to him an endless vigil, Amanda appeared in the doorway. With measured steps and great solemnity of mien, she approached, holding in her right hand a piece of white chalk.

"De hour has come," she chanted. "With this chalk, an' around this man, I make the mark of his image." Stooping, she began to trace his outline on the dull rag-carpet, speaking monotonously as she worked: "Gordon Lee Surrender Jones, I command all the aches an' the pains, all the miseries an' fool notions, includin' the cricket in yer leg, to pass outen yer real body

into this heah image on the floor. Keep yer head still, nigger! I pass 'em through you into yer symbol, an' from thence I draws 'em out to satisfy yer mind now and forever more, amen. Now roll over to the right an' watch what's about to happen."

The patient by this time was so interested that he followed instructions mechanically. He saw Amanda dart into the kitchen and emerge with an object totally unfamiliar to him. It was a heavy, box-shaped object, attached to a long handle. This she placed on the chalked outline of his right leg. Then she stood with her eyes fixed on the floor and solemnly chanted:

"Draw, draw, 'cordin' to the law,
Lif' the hoodoo, now I beg,
An' draw the cricket
F'om this heah leg!"

And Gordon Lee, raised on his elbow, watching with protruding eyes, *heard* it draw! He heard the heavy, panting breathing as Amanda ran the vacuum cleaner over every inch of the chalked outline, and when she stopped and, kneeling beside the box, removed a small bag of

dust and lint, he was not in the least surprised to see a cricket jump from the débris.

"Praise be!" he cried in sudden ecstasy. "De pain's done lef' me, de spell's done lifted!"

"An' the cricket's done removed," urged Amanda, skilfully getting the machine out of sight. "You seen it removed with yer own eyes."

"Wid my own eyes," echoed Gordon Lee, still in a state of self-hypnosis.

"An' now," she said, "I'm goin' to git that supper ready jes as quick ez I kin."

"Ain't you gwine help me back in bed fust?" he asked from where he still lay on the floor.

"What fer?" she exclaimed. "Ain't the spell lifted? I'm goin' to set the table in the kitchen, an' ef you wants any of that possum an' sweet pertater an' that apple-dumplin' an' hard sass, you got to walk in there to git em."

For ten minutes Gordon Lee Surrender Jones lay flat on his back on the floor, trying to trace the course of human events during the last half-hour. Against the dim suspicion that Amanda had in some way outwitted him rose the stagger-

ing evidence of that very live cricket that still hopped about the room, chirping contentedly.

Twice Amanda spoke to him, but he refused to answer. His silence did not seem to affect her good spirits, for she continued her work, singing softly to herself.

Despite himself, he became aware of the refrain, and before he knew it he was going over the familiar words with her:

"Oh, chicken-pie an' pepper, oh!
Chicken-pie is good, I know;
So is wattehmillion, too;
So is rabbit in a stew;
So is dumplin's, b'iled with squab;
So is cawn, b'iled on de cob;
So is chine an' turkey breast;
So is aigs des f'om de nest."

Gordon Lee rose unsteadily. Holding to a chair, he reached the table, then the door, through which he shambled, and sheepishly took his old place at the foot of the table. Amanda outdid herself in serving him, emptying the larder in honor of the occasion; but neither of them spoke until the apple-dumpling was

reached. Then Gordon Lee turned toward her and said confidentially:

"I wished we knowed some corpse we could sell dat coffin to."

A MATTER OF FRIENDSHIP

A MATTER OF FRIENDSHIP

WHEN a jovial young person in irreproachable pongee, and a wholly reproachable brown topi, scrambled up the lifting gang-plank of the big Pacific liner, setting sail from Yokohama, he was welcomed with acclaim. The Captain stopped swearing long enough to megaphone a greeting from the bridge, the First Officer slapped him on the back, while the half dozen sailors, tugging at the ropes, grinned as one man.

Three months before this good ship *East India* had carried Frederick Reynolds out to the Orient and deposited him on the alien soil, an untried youth of unimpeachable morals with a fatal facility for making friends.

The temporary transplanting had had a strange and exotic effect. The East has a way of developing crops of wild oats that have been neglected in the West, and by the end of his

sojourn Mr. Frederick Reynolds had seen more, felt more, and lived more than in all of his previous twenty-four years put together. He had learned the difference between a "straight flush" and a "full house" under the palms at Raffles Hotel in Singapore; he had been instructed in the ways of the wise in Shanghai by a sophisticated attaché of the French Legation, who imparted his knowledge between sips of absinthe, as he looked down on the passing show from a teahouse on the Bubbling Well Road; he had rapturously listened to every sweet secret that Japan had to tell, and had left a wake of smiles from Nagasaki to Yokohama.

In fact, in three short months he was fully qualified to pass a connoisseur's judgment on a high-ball, to hold his own in a game of poker, and to carry on a fairly coherent flirtation in four different languages.

With this newly acquired wisdom he was now setting sail for home, having accomplished his downward career with such alacrity that he did not at all realize what had happened to him.

Nor did the return voyage promise much in

the way of silent meditation and timely repentance. The Captain placed Reynolds next to him at table, declaring that he was like an electric fan on a sultry day; the Purser, with the elasticity of conscience peculiar to pursers, moved him from the inexpensive inside room which he had engaged, to a spacious state-room on the promenade deck, where sufficient corks were drawn nightly to make a small life preserver.

The one person who watched these proceedings with disfavor was a short, attenuated, bow-legged Chinaman, with a face like a grotesque brass knocker, and a taciturnity that enveloped him like a fog.

On the voyage out, Tsang Foo, the assistant deck steward, had gotten into a fight with a brother Chinaman, and had been saved from dismissal by Reynolds's timely intercession at headquarters. In dumb gratitude for this service, he had laid his celestial soul at the feet of the young American and sworn eternal allegiance.

From the day Reynolds reëmbarked, Tsang's

silken, slippered feet silently followed him from smoking-room to bar, from bar back to smoking-room. Whatever emotion troubled the depths of his being, no sign of it rose to his ageless, youthless face. But whether he was silently performing his duties on deck, or sitting on the hatchway smoking his opium, his vigilant eyes from their long, narrow slits kept watch.

For thirteen days the sun sparkled on the blue waters of the Pacific, and favoring breezes gave every promise of landing the *East India* in port with the fastest record of the season. Bets went higher and higher on each day's running, and the excitement was intense each evening in the smoking-room when the numbers most likely to win the next day's pool were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

It was the afternoon of the fourteenth day, thirty-six hours out from San Francisco, that Mr. Frederick Reynolds, who had bet more, drunk more, talked more, and laughed more than any man on board, suddenly came to his full senses. Then it was that he went quietly to his luxurious state-room with its brass bed and

crimson hangings, and took a forty-two caliber revolver from his steamer trunk. Slipping a cartridge into the cylinder, he sat breathing heavily and staring impatiently before him.

From outside above the roar of the ocean, came the tramp of the passengers on deck, and the trivial scraps of conversation that floated in kept side-tracking his thoughts, preventing their reaching the desired destination.

The world, which he had sternly resolved to leave, seemed determined to stay with him as long as possible. He heard Glass, the actor, inquiring for him, and in spite of himself he felt flattered; he heard the pretty girl whose steamer chair was next his, make a conditional engagement with the high-voiced army-officer, and he knew why she left the matter open; even a plaintive old voice inquiring how long it would be before tea, caused him to wait for the answer.

At last, as if to present his misery in embodied form, he produced a note-book and tried to concentrate his attention upon the items therein recorded. Line after line of wavering figures danced in impish glee before him, defying in-

spection. But at the foot of the column, like soldiers waiting to shoot a prisoner, stood four formidable units unquestionably pointing his way to doom.

As he looked at them Reynolds's thoughts got back on the main track and rushed to a conclusion. Tearing the leaf from the book, and crushing it in his hand, he jumped to his feet. Seized with a fury of self-disgust, he pulled off his coat and collar, and with the reckless courage of a boy put the mouth of the revolver to his temple.

As he did so the room darkened. He involuntarily looked up. Framed in the circle of the port-hole were the head and shoulders of Tsang Foo. Not a muscle of the yellow face moved, not a tremor of the slanting eyelids showed surprise. The right hand, holding a bit of tow, mechanically continued polishing the brass around the port-hole, but the left—long, thin, and with claw-like nails, shot stealthily forward and snatched the pistol.

For a full minute the polishing continued, then face and figure vanished, and Reynolds

was left staring in impotent rage at the empty port-hole.

When the room steward appeared in answer to an imperative summons, he was directed to send Tsang Foo to room No. 7 at once.

Tsang came almost immediately, bearing tea and anchovy sandwiches, which he urbanely placed on a camp-stool.

"Where's my pistol?" demanded Reynolds hotly, holding to the door to steady himself.

Tsang's eyes, earnest as a dog's, were lifted to his:

"He fall overboard," he explained suavely, "me velly solly."

Reynolds impulsively lifted his arm to strike, but a second impulse, engulfing the first, made him turn and fling himself upon his berth, struggling to master the heavy sobs that shook him from head to foot.

The Chinaman softly closed the door and slipped the bolt, then he dropped to a sitting posture on the floor and waited.

When the squall had passed, Reynolds addressed his companion from the depths of the

pillows in language suited to his comprehension.

"Me belong large fool, Tsang!" he said savagely. "Have drink too much. No good. You go 'long, I'm all right now."

Tsang's eye swept the disordered room and returned to the figure on the bed. "Suppose me go," he said, "you makee one hole in head?"

"That's my busniess," said Reynolds, his wrath rekindling. "You go 'long, and get my pistol; there's a good chap."

Tsang did not stir; he sat with his hands clasped about his knees, and contemplated space with the abstract look of a Buddha gazing into Nirvana.

Reynolds passed from persuasion to profanity with no satisfactory result. His language, whether eloquent or fiery, beat upon an unresponsive ear. But being in that condition that demands sympathy, he found the mere talking a relief, and presently drifted into a recital of his woes.

"I'm up against it, in the hole, you know, much largee trouble," he amplified with many gestures, sitting on the side of his berth, and

pounding out excited, incoherent phrases to the impassive figure opposite. "Company sent me out to collect money. My have spent all. No can go back home. Suppose my lose face, more better die!"

Tsang shifted his position and nodded gravely. Out of much that was unintelligible, the last statement loomed clear and incontrovertible.

"I'm a thief!" burst out Reynolds passionately, not to Tsang now, but to the world at large, "a plain, common thief. And the worst of it is there isn't a man in that San Francisco office that doesn't trust me down to the ground. Then there's the Governor. O God! I can't face the Governor!"

Tsang sat immovable, lost in thought. Stray words and phrases helped, but it was by some subtle working of his own complex brain that he was arriving at the truth.

"Father, him no can lend money?" he suggested presently.

"The Governor? Good heavens, no. There's not enough money in our whole family to wad a

gun! They put up all they had to give me a start, and look where I have landed! Do you suppose I'd go back and ask them to put up a thousand more for my rotten foolishness?" He knotted his hands together until the nails grew white then, seeing the unenlightened face below, he added emphatically: "No, no, Tsang, no can askee!"

"How fashion you losee money?" asked Tsang.

"The money? Oh, belong gamble. Bet on ship's run. First day—win. Second day—win. Then lose, lose, keep on losing. Didn't know half the time what I was doing. To-day my settle up; no can pay office. A thousand dollars out! Lord! All same two thousand Mex', Tsang!"

An invisible calculation was made on the end of the steamer trunk by a long, pointed, finger-nail, but no change of expression crossed the yellow face. For an incalculable time Tsang sat, lost in thought. All his conserved energy went to aid him in solving the problem. At last he reached a decision: this was clearly a case to

be laid before the only god he knew, the god of Chance.

"Me gamble too," he said; "me no lose."

"But s'pose you *had* lost? S'pose you lose what no belong you? What thing you do?"

"You do all same my talkee you?" asked Tsang, for the first time lifting his eyes.

It was a slender straw, to be sure, but Reynolds grasped at it.

"What thing you mean, Tsang? What can I do?"

"Two more night' to San Flancisco," said Tsang softly; "one more bet, maybe?"

"Oh, I've thought of that. What's the good of throwing good money after bad? No use, I no got chance."

"*My* have got chance," announced Tsang emphatically, "you bet how fashion my talkee you, your money come back."

Reynolds studied the brass knocker of a face, but found no clue to the riddle. "What you mean, Tsang?" he asked. "What do you know? For the Lord's sake don't fool with me about it!"

"Me no fool," declared Tsang. "You le' me talkee number, him win big heap money."

"But how do you know?"

"Me savey," said Tsang enigmatically.

Again Reynolds studied the impassive face. "It's on the square, Tsang? You don't stand in with anybody below decks? The thing is on the level?" Then finding further elucidation necessary, he added, "No belong cheat?"

Tsang Foo shook his head positively. "No belong cheat, all belong ploper. No man savey, only me savey, this side," and he tapped his head significantly.

Reynolds gave a short, unpleasant laugh. "All right," he said, thrusting his hand in his pocket. "I'll give myself one more chance. There'll be time to-morrow to finish my job. I'll make a bargain with you, Tsang! Bet this, and this, and this, on the next run for me. You win, I no makee shoot; you lose, you promise bring back pistol, then go way. My can do what thing my wantchee, see?"

Tsang Foo looked at him cunningly: "I win,

you belong good boy? Stop whisky-soda, maybe?"

Reynolds laughed in spite of himself: "Going to reform me, eh? All right, it's a bargain."

Tsang allowed his hand to be shaken, then he carefully counted over the express checks that had been given to him.

"My go now," he announced as eight bells sounded from the bridge.

As the door closed Reynolds sighed, then his eyes brightened as they fell upon the sandwiches. Even a desperate young man on the verge of suicide if he is hungry must needs cheer up temporarily at the sight of food. Reynolds had taken an early breakfast after being up all night, and had eaten nothing since. After devouring the sandwiches and tea with relish, he ordered a hot bath, and in less than an hour was wrapped in his berth sleeping the sleep that is not confined to the righteous.

It was high noon the next day when he awoke. His first feeling was one of exhilaration: the long sleep, the fresh sea air pouring in at the

port-hole, and a sense of perfect physical well-being had made him forget, for a moment, the serious business the day might have in store for him.

As he lay, half dozing, he became dimly aware that something was wrong. The throb of the engines had ceased, and an ominous stillness prevailed. He sat up in bed and listened, then he thrust his head out of the port-hole, only to see a deserted deck. The passage was likewise deserted save for a hurried stewardess, who called back, over her shoulder, "It's a man overboard, sir, on the starboard side—"

Reynolds flung on his clothes. The boy in him was keen for excitement, and in five minutes he was on deck, and had joined the crowd of passengers that thronged the railing.

The life-boat was being lowered, groaning and protesting as it cleared the davits and swung away from the ship's side. Far behind, in the still shining wake of the steamer, a small black object bobbed helplessly in the gray expanse of waters.

"What's the matter?" "Did he fall over-

board?" "Did he jump in?" "Was it suicide?" The air buzzed with questions. The sentimental contingent clung to the theory that it was some poor stoker who could no longer stand the heat, or a foreign refugee afraid to come into port. The more practical argued that it was probably one of the seamen who, while doing outside painting, had lost his balance and fallen into the sea.

A smug, well-dressed man, with close-cropped gray beard, and a detached gaze that seemed to go no further than his rimless glasses, turned and spoke to Reynolds:

"It has gotten to be quite the fashion for somebody in the steerage to create this sort of sensation. It happened as I went over. If a man sees fit to jump overboard, all well and good; in nine cases out of ten it's a good riddance to the community. But why in Heaven's name should the steamer put back? Why should several hundred people be delayed an hour or so for the sake of an inconsiderate, useless fool?"

Reynolds turned away sickened. From a

point, apart from the rest, he strained his eyes to keep in sight the small black object now hidden, now revealed, by the waves. A fierce sense of kinship for that man in the water seized him. He, too, perhaps had grappled with some unendurable situation and been overcome. What if he was an utterly worthless asset on the great human ledger? He was a fellow-being, suffering, tempted, vanquished. Was it kind to bring him back, to go through with it all again?

For answer Reynolds's muscles strained with those of the sailors rowing below: all the life and youth in him rose in rebellion against unnecessary death. He watched with teeth hard set as the small boat climbed to the crest of a wave, then plunged into the trough again, crawling by imperceptible inches toward the bobbing spot in the water. He longed to be in the boat, in the water even, helping to save that human life that only on the verge of extinction had gained significance. What if the man wished to die? No matter, he must be saved, saved from himself, given another chance, made to

face it out, whatever it was. Not until then did Reynolds remember another life that he had dared to threaten, that even now he meant to take if the wheel of chance swung against him. Suddenly he faced the awful judgment of his own act, and shuddered back as one who, standing upon a precipice, trembles in terror before the mad desire to leap.

"I'll stick it out!" he said half aloud as if in promise. "Whatever comes, I'll take my medicine, I'll—"

An eager murmur swept through the crowd. A sailor with a rope about him was being lowered from the life-boat.

For five tense minutes the two men rose and fell at the mercy of the high waves, and the distance between them did not lessen by an inch.

Then a passenger with a binocular announced that the sailor was swimming around to the far side to get the man between him and the boat.

With long, steady, overhand strokes, the sailor was gaining his way, and when at last he reached the apparently motionless object and got a rope under its arms, and the two were

hauled into the life-boat, a rousing cheer went up from the big steamer above.

Reynolds drew in his breath sharply and turned away from the railing. As he did so he was hailed by a group of friends who were returning to their cards, waiting face downward on the small tables in the smoking-room.

"Behold His Nibs!" shouted Glass, the actor, "the luckiest duffer that ever hit a high-ball!"

"How did you happen to do it?" cried another.

Reynolds lifted his hand to his bewildered head. "Do what?" he asked dully. "I'm not on."

"Oh, come!" said Glass, shaking him by the shoulder; "that bet you sent in last night! When the Chink said you wanted to buy the low field for all six pools, and to bet five hundred to boot that you'd win, I thought you were either drunk or crazy. Yesterday's run was four-fifty-one, a regular corker, and yet with even better weather conditions, you took only the numbers below four-thirty-one. I argued with the Chinaman 'til I was blue in the face, but he

stood pat, said you were all right, and had told him what to do. Nothing but an accident could have saved you, and it arrived. You've won the biggest pool of the crossing, don't you think it's about time for you to set 'em up? Say Martini cocktails for the crowd, eh?"

Reynolds was jostled about in congratulation and good-humored banter. Everybody was glad of the boy's success, he was an all round favorite, and some of the men who had won his money felt relieved to return it.

"Here's your cocktail, Freddy," cried Glass, "and here's to you!"

Reynolds stood in the midst of the crowd, his face flushed, his hair tumbled. With a quick movement he sent the glass and its contents spinning out of a near-by port-hole.

"Not for Frederick!" he said with emphasis, "I've been that particular kind of a fool for the last time."

Some hours later when the crowd went below to dress for dinner, Reynolds dropped behind to ask the Second Officer about the man who had been rescued.

"He is still pretty full of salt water," said the Officer, "but he is being bailed out."

"How did it happen?" asked Reynolds.

"Give it up. He hasn't spoken yet. It looks as if he were getting ready to do some outside cleaning, for he had on a life-preserver. Funny thing about it, though, that's not his work. He's not even on duty during the starboard watch. The man in the lookout saw him climb out on the bow, shout something up to him, then fall backward into the water. I'll be hanged if I can make it out. Tsang Foo is one of the steadiest sailors on board."

"Tsang Foo!" shouted Reynolds. "You don't mean that man was Tsang?"

With headlong haste he seized the bewildered officer and made him pilot him below decks. Stumbling down the ladders and through dark passages, he at last reached the bunk where Tsang Foo lay with the ship's surgeon and a steward in attendance.

The Chinaman's lips were drawn tightly back over his prominent teeth, and his breath came in irregular gasps. Across the pillow in a

straight black line lay his dripping queque. As his eyelids fluttered feebly, the doctor straightened his own tired back.

"He'll come round now, all right," he said to the steward. "Give him those drops and don't talk to him. He's had a close call. I'll be back in ten minutes."

Reynolds crowded into the narrow space the doctor had left. The fact that he was saved from disgrace was utterly blotted out by the bigger fact that this ignorant, uncouth, foreign sailor had fearlessly risked his life to save him from facing a merited punishment. Reynolds's very soul seemed to grow bigger to accommodate the thought.

"Tsang!" he whispered, seizing the yellow hand, "You are a brick! Number one good man. But my no can take money,—I—"

The steward in attendance, who had stepped aside, made a warning gesture and laid his finger on his lips.

For five minutes the man in the bunk and the one beside it looked silently into each other's eyes, then the drawn lips moved, and Reynolds,

bending his head to listen, heard the broken question:

"You—no—blake—bargain?"

Reynolds's mind dashed at two conclusions and recoiled from each. Should he follow his impulse to explain the whole affair, serious consequences would result for Tsang, while the other alternative of accepting the situation made him a party, albeit an innocent one, to a most reprehensible proceeding. It was to his credit, that of the two courses the latter was infinitely the more intolerable. He got up nervously, then sat down again.

"No—blake—bargain?" repeated Tsang anxiously.

Still Reynolds waited for some prompting from a conscience unaccustomed to being rusty. Any course that would involve the loyal little Chinaman, who had played the game according to the rules as he knew them, was out of the question. The money must be paid back, of course, but how, and when? If he cleared himself at the office it might be years before he could settle this new debt, but he could do it in

time, he must do it. Then at last, light came to him. He would accept Tsang's sacrifice but it should stand for more than the mere material good it had purchased. It should pledge him to a fresh start, a clean life. He would justify the present by the future. He drew a deep breath of relief and leaned forward:

"Tsang," he said, and his voice trembled with the earnestness of his resolve, "I no break bargain. From now on my behave all same proper. It wasn't right, old fellow, you oughtn't—" then he gave it up and smiled helplessly, "you belong my good friend Tsang, what thing you wantchee?"

A slow smile broke the brass-like stillness of Tsang Foo's face:

"Pipe," he gasped softly, "opium velly good, —make land and sea—all same—by an' by!"

THE WILD OATS OF A SPINSTER

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JUDGING from appearances Miss Lucinda Perkins was justifying her reason for being by conforming absolutely to her environment. She apparently fitted as perfectly into her little niche in the Locustwood Seminary for young ladies as Miss Joe Hill fitted into hers. The only difference was that Miss Joe Hill did not confine herself to a niche; she filled the seminary, as a plump hand does a tight glove.

It was the year after Miss Lucinda had come to the seminary to teach elocution that Miss Joe Hill discovered in her an affinity. As principal, Miss Joe Hill's word was never questioned, and Miss Lucinda, with pleased obedience, accepted the honor that was thrust upon her, and meekly moved her few belongings into Miss Joe Hill's apartment.

For four years they had lived in the rarified

atmosphere of celestial friendship. They clothed their bodies in the same raiment, and their minds in the same thoughts, and when one was cold the other shivered.

If Miss Lucinda, in those early days found it difficult to live up to Miss Joe Hill's transcendental code she gave no sign of it. She laid aside her mildly adorned garments and enveloped her small angular person in a garb of sombre severity. Even the modest bird that adorned her hat was replaced by an uncompromising band. She foreswore meat and became a vegetarian. She stopped reading novels and devoted her spare time to essays and biography. In fact she and Miss Joe Hill became one and that one was Miss Joe Hill.

It was not until Floss Speckert entered the senior class at Locustwood Seminary that this sublimated friendship suffered a jar.

Floss's father lived in Chicago, and it was due to his unerring discernment in the buying and selling of live stock that Floss was being "finished" in all branches without regard to the cost.

"Learn her all you want to," he said magnanimously to Miss Lucinda, who negotiated the arrangement. "I ain't got but two children, her and Tom. He's just like me—don't know a blame thing but business; but Floss—" his bosom swelled under his checked vest—"she's on to it all. I pay for everything you get into her head. Dancin', singin', French—all them extries goes."

Miss Lucinda had consequently undertaken the management of Floss Speckert, and the result had been far-reaching in its consequences.

Floss was a person whose thoughts did not dwell upon the highest development of the spiritual life. Her mind was given over to the pursuit of worldly amusements, her only serious thought being a burning ambition to win histrionic honors. The road to this led naturally through the elocution classes, and Floss accepted Miss Lucinda as the only means toward the desired end.

A drop of water in a bottle of ink produces no visible result, but a drop of ink in a glass of water contaminates it at once. Miss Lucinda

took increasing interest in her frivolous young pupil; she listened with half-suppressed eagerness to unlimited gossip about stage-land, and even sank to the regular perusal of certain bold theatrical papers. She was unmistakably becoming contaminated.

Meanwhile Miss Joe Hill, quite blind to the situation, condoned the friendship. "You are developing your own character," she told Miss Lucinda. "You are exercising self-control and forbearance in dealing with that crude, undisciplined girl. Florence is the natural outcome of common stock and newly acquired riches. It is your noble aspiration to take this vulgar clay and mold it into something higher. Your motive is laudable, Lucinda; your self-sacrifice in giving up our evening hour together is heroic. I read you like an open book, dear."

And Miss Lucinda listened and trembled. They were standing together before the window of their rigid little sitting room, the chastened severity of which banished all ideas of comfort. "What purpose do you serve?" Miss Joe Hill demanded of every article that went into her

apartment, and many of the comforts of life failed to pass the examination.

After Miss Joe Hill had gone out, Miss Lucinda remained at the window and restlessly tapped her knuckles against the sill. The insidious spring sunshine, the laughter of the girls in the court below, the foolish happy birds telling their secrets under the new, green leaves, all worked together to disturb her peace of mind.

She resolutely turned her back to the window and took breathing exercises. That was one of Miss Joe Hill's sternest requirements—fifteen minutes three times a day and two pints of water between meals. Then she sat down in a straight-back chair and tried to read "The Power Through Poise." Her body was doing its duty, but it did not deceive her mind. She knew that she was living a life of black deception; evidences of her guilt were on every hand. Behind the books on her little shelf was a paper of chocolate creams; in the music rack, back to back with Grieg and Brahms, was an impertinent sheet of ragtime which Floss had persuaded her to learn as an accompaniment. And

deeper and darker and falser than all was a plan which had been fermenting in her mind for days.

In a fortnight the school term would be over. Following the usual custom, Miss Lucinda was to go to her brother in the country and Miss Joe Hill to her sister for a week. This obligation to their respective families being discharged, they would repair to the seclusion of a Catskill farmhouse, there to hang upon each other's souls for the rest of the summer.

Miss Lucinda's visits to her brother were reminiscent of a multiplicity of children and a scarcity of room. To her the Inferno presented no more disquieting prospect than the necessity of sharing her bedroom. She always returned from these sojourns in the country with impaired digestion, and shattered nerves. She looked forward to them with dread and looked back on them with horror. Was it any wonder that when a brilliant alternative presented itself she was eager to accept it?

Floss Speckert had gained her father's consent to spend her first week out of school in

New York provided she could find a suitable chaperon. She had fallen upon the first and most harmless person in sight and besieged her with entreaties.

Miss Lucinda would have flared to the project had not a forbidding presence loomed between her and the alluring invitation. She knew only too well that Miss Joe Hill would never countenance the proposition.

As she sat trying vainly to concentrate on her "Power Through Poise," she was startled by a noise at the window, followed immediately by a dishevelled figure that scrambled laughingly over the sill.

"I came down the fire escape!" whispered the invader breathlessly, "Miss Joe Hill caught us making fudge in the linen closet, and I gave her the slip."

"But Florence!" Miss Lucinda began reproachfully, but Floss interrupted her:

"Don't 'Florence' me, Miss Lucy! You're just pretending to be mad anyhow. You are a perfect darling and Miss Joe Hill is an old bear!"

Miss Lucinda was aghast at this irreverence but her halting protests had no effect on the torrent of Floss's eloquence.

"I am going to take you to New York," the girl declared "and I am going to give you the time of your life! Dad's got to put us up in style—a room and a bath apiece and maybe a sitting room. He likes me to splurge around a bit, says he'd hate to have a daughter that acted like she wasn't used to money."

Miss Lucinda glanced apprehensively at the door and then back at the sparkling face before her.

"I can't go," she insisted miserably, trying to free her hand from Floss's plump grasp. "My brother is expecting me and Miss Hill—"

"Oh, bother Miss Joe Hill! You don't have to tell her anything about it! You can pretend you are going to your brother's and meet me some place on the road instead."

Miss Lucinda looked horrified, but she listened. A material kept plastic by years of manipulation does not harden to a new hand.

Her objections to Floss's plan grew fainter and fainter.

"Think of the theaters," went on the temptress, putting an arm around her neck, and ignoring the fact that caresses embarrassed Miss Lucinda almost to the point of tears; "think of it! A new show every night, and operas and pictures. There will be three Shakspere plays that week, 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Twelfth Night,' and 'Hamlet.' "

Miss Lucinda's heart fluttered in her bosom. Although she had spent a great part of her life interpreting the Bard of Avon, she had never seen one of his plays produced. In her secret soul she believed that her own rendition of "The quality of mercy," was not to be excelled.

"I—I haven't any clothes," she urged feebly, putting up her last defense.

"I have," declared Floss in triumph—"two trunks full, and we are almost the same size. It's just for a week, Miss Lucy; won't you come?"

Miss Lucinda, sitting rigid, felt a warm

cheek pressed against her own, and a stray curl touched her lips. She sat for a moment with her eyes closed. It was more than disconcerting to be so close to youth and joy and life; it was infectious. The blood surged suddenly through her veins, and an exultation seized her.

"I'm going to do it," she cried recklessly; "I never had a real good time in my life."

Floss threw her arms about her and waltzed her across the room, but a step in the hall brought them to a halt.

"It's Miss Joe Hill," whispered Floss, with trepidation; "I am going out the way I came. Don't you forget; you have promised."

When Miss Joe Hill entered, she smiled complacently at finding Miss Lucinda in the straight-back chair, absorbed in the second volume of the "Power Through Poise."

At the Union Depot in Chicago, two weeks later, a small, nervous lady fluttered uncertainly from one door to another. She wore a short, brown coat suit of classic severity, and a felt

hat which was fastened under her smoothly braided hair by a narrow elastic band.

On her fourth trip to the main entrance she stopped a train-boy. "Can you tell me where I can get a drink?" she asked, fanning her flushed face. He looked surprised. "Third door to the left," he answered. Miss Lucinda, carrying a hand-bag, a suit-case, and an umbrella, followed directions. When she pushed open the heavy door she was confronted by a long counter with shining glasses and a smiling bartender. Beating a confused retreat, she fled back to the main entrance, and stood there trembling. For the hundredth time that day she wished she had not come.

The arrangements, so glibly planned by Floss, had not been adhered to in any particular. At the last moment that mercurial young person had decided to go on two days in advance and visit a friend in Philadelphia. She wrote Miss Lucinda to come on to Chicago, where Tom would meet her and give her her ticket, and that she would meet her in New York.

With many misgivings and grievous twinges of conscience, Miss Lucinda had bade Miss Joe Hill a guilty farewell, and started ostensibly for her brother's home. At the Junction she changed cars for Chicago, missed two connections, and lost her lunch-box. Now that she had arrived in Chicago, three hours late, nervous and excited over her experiences, there was no one to meet her.

A sense of homesickness rushed over her, and she decided to return to Locustwood. It was the same motive that might prompt a newly hatched chicken, embarrassed by its sudden liberty, to return to its shell. Just as she was going in search of a time-table, a round-faced young man came up.

"Miss Perkins?" he asked, and when she nodded, he went on: "Been looking for you for half an hour. Sis told me what you looked like, but I couldn't find you." He failed to observe that Floss's comparison had been a squirrel.

"Isn't it nearly time to start?" asked Miss Lucinda, nervously.

"Just five minutes; but I want to explain

something to you first." He looked through the papers in his pocket and selected one. "This is a pass," he explained; "the governor can get them over this road. I got there late, so I could only get one that had been made out for somebody else and not been used. It's all right, you know; you won't have a bit of trouble."

Miss Lucinda took the bit of paper, put on her glasses, and read, "Mrs. Lura Doring."

"Yes," said Tom; "that's the lady it was made out for. Nine chances out of ten they won't mention it; but if anything comes up, you just say yes, you are Mrs. Doring, and it will be all right."

"But," protested Miss Lucinda, ready to weep, "I cannot tell a falsehood."

"I don't think you'll have to," said Tom, somewhat impatiently; "but if you deny it, you'll get us both into no end of a scrape. Hello! there's the call for your train. I'll bring your bag."

In the confusion of getting settled in her section, and of expressing her gratitude to Tom,

Miss Lucinda forgot for the time the deadly weight of guilt that rested upon her. It was not until the conductor called for her ticket that her heart grew cold, and a look of consternation swept over her face. It seemed to her that he eyed the pass suspiciously and when he did not return it a terror seized her. She knew he was coming back to ask her name, and what was her name? Mrs. Dora Luring, or Mrs. Dura Loring, or Mrs. Lura Doring?

In despair she fled to the dressing room and stood there concealed by the curtains. In a few moments the conductor passed, and she peeped at his retreating figure. He stopped in the narrow passage by the window and studied her pass, then he compared it with a telegram which he held in his hand. Just then the porter joined him, and she flattened herself against the wall and held her breath.

"It's the same name," she heard the conductor say in an undertone. "I'll wire back to headquarters at the next stop."

If ever retribution followed an erring soul, it followed Miss Lucinda on that trip. No one

spoke to her, and nothing happened, but she sat in terrified suspense, looking neither to right nor left, her heart beating frantically at every approach, and the whirring wheels repeating the questioning refrain, "Dora Luring? Dura Loring? Lura Doring?"

In New York, Floss met her as she stepped off the train, fairly enveloping her in her enthusiasm.

"Here you are, you old darling! I have been having a fit a minute for fear you wouldn't come. This is my Cousin May. She is going to stay with us the whole week. New York is simply heavenly, Miss Lucy. We have made four engagements already. Matinée this afternoon, a dinner to-night—What's the matter? Did you leave anything on the train?"

"No, no," stammered Miss Lucinda, still casting furtive glances backward at the conductor. "Was he talking to a policeman?" she asked suspiciously.

"Who?"

"The conductor."

The girls laughed.

"I don't wonder you were scared," said Floss; "a policeman always does remind me of Miss Joe Hill."

They called a cab and, to Miss Lucinda's vast relief, were soon rolling away from the scene of danger.

It needed only one glance into a handsome suite of an up-town hotel one week later to prove the rapid moral deterioration of the prodigal.

Arrayed in a shell-pink kimono, she was having her nails manicured. Her gaily figured garment was sufficient in itself to give her an unusual appearance; but there was a more startling reason.

Miss Lucinda's hair, hitherto a pale drab smoothly drawn into a braided coil at the back, had undergone a startling metamorphosis. It was Floss's suggestion that Miss Lucinda wash it in "Golden Glow," a preparation guaranteed to restore luster and beauty to faded locks. Miss Lucinda had been over-zealous, and the result was that of copper in sunshine.

These outward manifestations, however, were

insignificant compared with the evidences of Miss Lucinda's inner guilt. She was taking the keenest interest in the manicure's progress, only lifting her eyes occasionally to survey herself with satisfaction in the mirror opposite.

At first her sense of propriety had been deeply offended by her changed appearance. She wept so bitterly that the girls, seeking to console her, had overdone the matter.

"I never thought you *could* look so pretty," Floss had declared; "you look ten years younger. It makes your eyes brighter and your skin clearer. Of course this awfully bright color will wear off, and then it will be just dear."

Miss Lucinda began to feel better; she even allowed May to arrange her changed locks in a modest pompadour.

The week she had spent in New York was a riotous round of dissipation. May's fiancé had prepared a whirlwind of pleasures, and Miss Lucinda was caught up and revolved at a pace that made her dizzy. Dances, dinners, plays, roof-gardens, coaching parties, were all held together by a line of candy, telegrams, and roses.

There was only one time in the day when Miss Lucinda came down to earth. Every evening, no matter how exhausted she might be from the frivolities of the day, she conscientiously penned an affectionate letter to her celestial affinity, expressing her undying devotion, and incidentally mentioning the health and doings of her brother's family. These she sent under separate cover to her brother to be mailed.

Her conscience assured her that the reckoning would come, that sooner or later she would face the bar of justice and receive the verdict of guilty; but while one day of grace remained, she would still "in the fire of spring, her winter garments of repentance fling."

As the manicure put the finishing touch to her nails, Floss came rushing in:

"Hurry up, Miss Lucy dear! Dick Benson has just 'phoned that he is going to take us for a farewell frolic. We leave here at five, have dinner somewhere, then do all sorts of stunts. You are going to wear my tan coat-suit and light blue waist. Yes, you are, too! That's all foolishness; everybody wears elbow-sleeves.

Blue's your color, and I've got the hat to match. May says she'll fix your hair, and you can wear her French-heel Oxfords again. They pitch you over? Oh, nonsense! you just tripped along the other day like a nice little jay-bird. Hurry, hurry!"

Even Miss Lucinda's week of strenuous living had not prepared her for what followed. First, there was a short trip on the train, during which she conscientiously studied a map. Then followed a dinner at a large and ostentatious hotel. The decorations were more brilliant, the music louder, and the dresses gayer, than at any place Miss Lucinda had yet been. She viewed the passing show through her glasses, and experienced a pleasant thrill of sophistication. This, she assured herself, was society; henceforth she was in a position to rail at its follies as one having authority.

In the midst of these complacent reflections she choked on a crumb, and, after groping with closed eyes for her tumbler, gulped down the contents. A strange, delicious tingle filled her mouth; she forgot she was choking, and opened

her eyes. To her horror, she found that she had emptied her glass of champagne.

"Spirituous liquor!" she thought in dismay, as the shade of Miss Joe Hill rose before her.

Total abstinence was such a firm plank in the platform of the celestial affinity that, even in the chafing-dish, alcohol had been tabooed. The utter iniquity of having deliberately swallowed a glass of champagne was appalling to Miss Lucinda. She sat silent during the rest of the dinner, eating little, and plucking nervously at the ruffles about her elbows. The fear of rheumatism in her wrists which had assailed her earlier in the evening gave way to a deeper and more disturbing discomfort.

When the dinner was over, the party started forth on a hilarious round of sight-seeing. Miss Lucinda limped after them, vaguely aware that she was in a giant electric cage filled with swarming humanity, that bands were playing, drums beating, and that at every turn disagreeable men with loud voices were imploring her to "step this way."

"Come on!" cried Dick. "We are going on the scenic railway."

But the worm turned. "I—I'm not going," she protested. "I will wait here. All of you go; I will wait right here."

With a sigh of relief she slipped into a vacant corner, and gave herself up to the luxury of being miserable. She longed for solitude in which to face the full enormity of her misdeed, and to plan an immediate reformation. She would throw herself bodily upon the mercy of Miss Joe Hill, she would spare herself nothing; penance of any kind would be welcome, bodily pain even—

She shifted her weight to the slender support of one high-heeled shoe while she rested the other foot. Her hair, unused to its new arrangement, pulled cruelly upon every restraining hair-pin, and her head was beginning to ache.

"I deny the slavery of sense. I repudiate the bondage of matter. I affirm spirit and freedom," she quoted to herself, but the thought failed to have any effect.

A two-ringed circus was in progress at her right while at her left a procession of camels and Egyptians was followed by a noisy crowd of urchins. People were thronging in every direction, and she realized that she was occasionally the recipient of a curious glance. She began to watch rather anxiously for the return of her party. Ten minutes passed, and still they did not come.

Suddenly the awful possibility presented itself that they might have lost her. She had no money, and even with it, she knew she could not find her way back to the hotel alone. Anxiety gained upon her in leaps. In bitter remorse she upbraided herself for ever having strayed from the blessed protection of Miss Joe Hill's authority. Gulfs of hideous possibility yawned at her feet; imagination faltered at the things that might befall a lone and unprotected lady in this bedlam of frivolity.

Just as her fear was turning to terror the party returned.

"Oh, here you are!" cried Floss. "We

thought we had lost you. It was just dandy, Miss Lucy; you ought to have gone. It makes you feel like your feet are growing right out of the top of your head. Come on; we are going to have our tintypes taken."

Strengthened by the fear of being left alone again, Miss Lucinda rallied her courage, and once more followed in their wake. She was faint and exhausted, but the one grain of comfort she extracted from the situation was that through her present suffering she was atoning for her sins.

At midnight Dick said: "There's only one other thing to do. It's more fun than all the rest put together. Come this way."

Miss Lucinda followed blindly. She had ceased to think: there were only two realities left in the world, French-heels and hair-pins.

At the foot of a flight of steps the party paused to buy tickets.

"You can wait for us here, Miss Lucy," said Floss.

Miss Lucinda protested eagerly that she was

not too tired to go with them. The prospect of being left alone again nerved her to climb to any height.

"But," cried Floss, "if you get up there, there's only one way to come down. You have to—"

"Let her come!" interrupted the others in laughing chorus, and, to Miss Lucinda's great relief, she was allowed to pass through the little gate.

When she reached the top of the long stairs, she looked about for the attraction. A wide inclined plane slanted down to the ground floor, and on it were bumps of various sizes and shapes, all of a shining smoothness. She had a vague idea that it was a mammoth map for the blind, until she saw Dick and Floss sit down at the top and go sliding to the bottom.

"Come on, Miss Lucinda!" cried May. "You can't get down any other way, you know. Look out! Here I go!"

One by one the others followed, and Miss Lucinda could not distinguish them as they merged in the laughing crowd at the base.

Delay was fatal; they would lose her again if she hesitated. In desperation she gathered her skirts about her, and let herself cautiously down on the floor. For one awful moment terror paralyzed her, then, grasping her skirts with one hand and her hat with the other and closing her eyes, she slid.

Miss Lucinda did not "bump the bumps"; she slid gracefully around them, describing fanciful curves and loops in her airy flight. When she arrived in a confused bunch on the cushioned platform below, she was greeted with a burst of applause.

"Ain't it great?" cried Floss, straightening Miss Lucinda's hat and trying to get her to open her eyes. "Dick says you are the gamest chaperon he ever saw. Sit up and let me pin your collar straight."

But Miss Lucinda's sense of direction had evidently been disturbed, for she did not yet know which was up, and which was down. She leaned limply against Floss and tried to get her breath.

"Excuse me," said a man's voice above her,

"but are either of you ladies Mrs. Lura Doring?"

The effect was electrical. Miss Lucinda sat bolt upright and stared madly about. Tom Speckert had told her to be sure to answer to that name. It would get him into trouble if she failed to do so.

"Yes, yes," she gasped; "I am Mrs. Lura Doring."

The members of her little party looked at her anxiously and ceased to laugh. The slide had evidently unsettled her mind.

"Why, this is Miss Perkins—Miss Lucinda Perkins of Locustwood, Ohio," explained Dick Benson to the officer. "She's rather upset by her tobogganing, and didn't understand you."

"I did," declared Miss Lucinda, making mysterious signs to Dick to be silent. "It's all right; I am Mrs. Doring."

The officer looked suspiciously from one to the other, then consulted his memorandum: "Small, slender woman, yellow hair, gray eyes, answers to name of Mrs. Lura Doring. Left Chicago on June 10."

"When did she get to New York?" asked the officer.

"A week ago to-morrow, on the eleventh," said Floss.

"Then I guess I'll have to take her up," said the officer; "she answers all the requirements. I've got a warrant for her arrest."

"Arrest!" gasped Benson. "What for?"

"For forging her husband's name, and defrauding two hotels in Chicago."

"My husband—" Miss Lucinda staggered to her feet, then, catching sight of the crowd that had collected, she gave a fluttering cry and fainted away in the arms of the law.

When Miss Joe Hill arrived in New York, in answer to an urgent telegram, she went directly to work with her usual executive ability to unravel the mystery. After obtaining the full facts in the case, she was able to make a satisfactory explanation to the officers at headquarters. Then she sent the girls to their respective homes, and turned her full attention upon Miss Lucinda.

"The barber will be here in half an hour to cut your hair," she announced on the eve of their departure for the Catskills.

"You ought not to be so good to me!" sobbed Miss Lucinda, who was lying limply on a couch.

Miss Joe Hill took her hand firmly and said: "Lucinda, error and illness and disorder are man-made perversions. Let the past week be wiped from our memories. Once we are in the mountains we will turn the formative power of our thoughts upon things invisible, and yield ourselves to the higher harmonies."

The next morning, Miss Lucinda, shorn and penitent, was led forth from the scene of her recent profligacy. It was her final exit from a world which for a little space she had loved not wisely but too well.

CUPID GOES SLUMMING

CUPID GOES SLUMMING

IT is a debatable question whether love is a cause or an effect, whether Adam discovered a heart in the recesses of his anatomy before or after the appearance of Eve. In the case of Joe Ridder it was distinctly the former.

At nineteen his knowledge of the tender passion consisted of dynamic impressions received across the footlights at an angle of forty-five degrees. Love was something that hovered with the calcium light about beauty in distress, something that brought the hero from the uttermost parts of the earth to hurl defiance at the villain and clasp the swooning maiden in his arms; it was something that sent a fellow down from his perch in the peanut gallery with his head hot and his hands cold, and a sort of blissful misery rioting in his soul.

Joe lived in what was known by courtesy as Rear Ninth Street. "Rear Ninth Street" has

a sound of exclusive aristocracy, and the name was a matter of some pride to the dwellers in the narrow, unpaved alley that writhed its watery way between two rows of tumble-down cottages. Joe's family consisted of his father, whose vocation was plumbing, and whose avocation was driving either in the ambulance or the patrol wagon; his mother, who had discharged her entire debt to society when she bestowed nine healthy young citizens upon it; eight young Ridders, and Joe himself, who had stopped school at twelve to assume the financial responsibilities of a rapidly increasing family.

Lack of time and the limited opportunities of Rear Ninth Street, together with an uncontrollable shyness, had brought Joe to his nineteenth year of broad-shouldered, muscular manhood, with no acquaintance whatever among the girls. But where a shrine is built for Cupid and the tapers are kept burning, the devotee is seldom disappointed.

One morning in October, as Joe was guiding his rickety wheel around the mud puddles on his way to the cooper shops, he saw a new sign

on the first cottage after he left the alley—"Mrs. R. Beaver, Modiste & Dress Maker." In the yard and on the steps were a confusion of household effects, and in their midst a girl with a pink shawl over her head.

So absorbed was Joe in open-mouthed wonder over the "Modiste," that he failed to see the girl, until a laughing exclamation made him look up.

"Watch out!"

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, coming to a halt.

"I thought maybe you didn't know your wheels was going 'round!" the girl said audaciously, then fled into the house and slammed the door.

All day at the shops Joe worked as in a trance. Every iron rivet that he drove into a wooden hoop was duly informed of the romantic occurrence of the morning, and as some four thousand rivets are fastened into four thousand hoops in the course of one day, it will be seen that the matter was duly considered. The stray spark from a feminine eye had kindled such a

fierce fire in his heart that by the time the six o'clock whistle blew the conflagration threw a rosy glow over the entire landscape.

As he rode home, the girl was sitting on the steps, but she would not look at him. Joe had formulated a definite course of action, and though the utter boldness of it nearly cost him his balance, he adhered to it strictly. When just opposite her gate, without turning his head or his eyes, he lifted his hat, then rode at a furious pace around the corner.

"What you tidying up so fer, Joe?" asked his mother that night; "you goin' out?"

"No," said Joe evasively, as he endeavoured in vain to coax back the shine to an old pair of shoes.

"Well, I'm right glad you ain't. Berney and Dick ain't got up the coal, and there's all them dishes to wash, and the baby she's got a misery in her year."

"Has paw turned up?" asked Joe.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Ridder indifferently. "He looked in 'bout three o'clock. He was tolerable full then, and I 'spec he's been took

up by now. He said he was goin' to buy me a bird-cage with a bird in it, but I surely hope he won't. Them white mice he brought me on his last spree chewed a hole in Berney's stocking; besides, I never did care much for birds. Good lands! what are you goin' to wash yer head for?"

Joe was substituting a basin of water for a small girl in the nearest kitchen chair, and a howl ensued.

"Shut up, Lottie!" admonished Mrs. Ridder, "you ain't any too good to set on the floor. It's a good thing this is pay-day, Joe, for the rent's due and four of the children's got their feet on the ground. You paid up the grocery last week, didn't you?"

Joe nodded a dripping head.

"Well, I'll jes' git yer money out of yer coat while I think about it," she went on as she rummaged in his pocket and brought out nine dollars.

"Leave me a quarter," demanded Joe, gasping beneath his soap-suds.

"All right," said Mrs. Ridder accommodat-

ingly; "now that Bob and Ike are gitting fifty cents a day, it ain't so hard to make out. I'll be gittin' a new dress first thing, you know."

"I seen one up at the corner!" said Joe.

"A new dress?"

"Naw, a dressmaker. She's got out her sign."

"What's her name?" asked Mrs. Ridder, keen with interest.

"Mrs. R. Beaver, Modeste," repeated Joe from the sign that floated in letters of gold in his memory.

"I knowed a Mrs. Beaver wunst, up on Eleventh Street—a big, fat woman that got in a fuss with the preacher and smacked his jaws."

"Did she have any children?" asked Joe.

"Seems like there was one, a pretty little tow-headed girl."

"That's her," announced Joe conclusively. "What was her name?"

"Lawsee, I don't know. I never would 'a' ricollected Mrs. Beaver 'cepten she was such a tarnashious woman, always a-tearin' up stumps, and never happy unless she was rip-

pitin' 'bout somethin'. *What* you want? A needle and thread to mend your coat? Why, what struck you? You been wearin' it that a-way for a month. You better leave it be 'til I git time to fix it."

But Joe had determined to work out the salvation of his own wardrobe. Late in the evening after the family had retired, he sat before the stove with back humped and knees drawn up trying to coax a coarse thread through a small needle. Surely no rich man need have any fear about entering the kingdom of heaven since Joe Ridder managed to get that particular thread through the eye of that particular needle!

But when a boy is put at a work-bench at twelve years of age and does the same thing day in and day out for seven long years, he may have lost all of the things that youth holds dear, but one thing he is apt to have learned, a dogged, plodding, unquestioning patience that shoves silently along at the appointed task until the work is done.

By midnight all the rents were mended and

a large new patch adorned each elbow. The patches, to be sure, were blue, and the coat was black, but the stitches were set with mechanical regularity. Joe straightened his aching shoulders and held the garment at arm's length with a smile. It was his first votive offering at the shrine of love.

The effect of Joe's efforts were prompt and satisfactory. The next day being Sunday, he spent the major part of it in passing and repassing the house on the corner, only going home between times to remove the mud from his shoes and give an extra brush to his hair. The girl, meanwhile, was devoting her day to sweeping off the front pavement, a scant three feet of pathway from her steps to the wooden gate. Every time Joe passed she looked up and smiled, and every time she smiled Joe suffered all the symptoms of locomotor ataxia!

By afternoon his emotional nature had reached the saturation point. Without any conscious volition on his part, his feet carried him to the gate and refused to carry him far-

ther. His voice then decided to speak for itself, and in strange, hollow tones he heard himself saying—

"Say, do you wanter go to the show with me?"

"Sure," said the pink fascinator. "When?"

"I don't care," said Joe, too much embarrassed to remember the days of the week.

"To-morrer night?" prompted the girl.

"I don't care," said Joe, and the conversation seeming to languish, he moved on.

After countless eons of time the next night arrived. It found Joe and his girl cosily squeezed in between two fat women in the gallery of the People's Theatre. Joe had to sit sideways and double his feet up, but he would willingly have endured a rack of torture for the privilege of looking down on that fluffy, blond pompadour under its large bow, and of receiving the sparkling glances that were flashed up at him from time to time.

"I ain't ever gone with a feller that I didn't know his name before!" she confided before the curtain rose.

"It's Joe," he said, "Joe Ridder. What's your front name?"

"Miss Beaver," she said mischievously. "What do you think it is?"

Joe could not guess.

"Say," she went on, "I knew who you was all right even if I didn't know yer name. I seen you over to the hall when they had the boxin' match."

"The last one?"

"Yes, when you and Ben Schenk was fightin'. Say, you didn't do a thing to him!"

The surest of all antidotes to masculine shyness was not without its immediate effect. Joe straightened his shoulders and smiled complacently.

"Didn't I massacre him?" he said. "That there was a half-Nelson holt I give him. It put him out of business all right, all right. Say, I never knowed you was there!"

"You bet I was," said his companion in honest admiration; "that was when I got stuck on you!"

Before he could fully comprehend the sig-

nificance of this confession, the curtain rose, and love itself had to make way for the tragic and absorbing career of "The Widowed Bride." By the end of the third act Joe's emotions were so wrought upon by the unhappy fate of the heroine, that he rose abruptly and, muttering something about "gittin' some gum," fled to the rear. When he returned and squeezed his way back to his seat he found "Miss Beaver" with red eyes and a dejected mien.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked banteringly.

"My shoe hurts me," said Miss Beaver evasively.

"What you givin' me?" asked Joe, with fine superiority. "These here kinds of play never hurts my feelin's none. Catch me cryin' at a show!"

But Miss Beaver was too much moved to recover herself at once. She sat in limp dejection and surreptitiously dabbed her eyes with her moist ball of a handkerchief.

Joe was at a loss to know how to meet the situation until his hand, quite by chance,

touched hers as it lay on the arm of her chair. He withdrew it as quickly as if he had received an electric shock, but the next moment, like a lodestone following a magnet, it traveled slowly back to hers.

From that time on Joe sat staring straight ahead of him in embarrassed ecstasy, while Miss Beaver, thus comforted, was able to pass through the tragic finale of the last act with remarkable composure.

When the time came to say "Good night" at the Beavers' door, all Joe's reticence and awkwardness returned. He watched her let herself in and waited until she lit a candle. Then he found himself out on the pavement in the dark feeling as if the curtain had gone down on the best show he had ever seen. Suddenly a side window was raised cautiously and he heard his name called softly. He had turned the corner, but he went back to the fence.

"Say!" whispered the voice at the window, "I forgot to tell you— It's Mittie."

The course of true love thus auspiciously started might have flowed on to blissful fulfil-

ment had it not encountered the inevitable barrier in the formidable person of Mrs. Beaver. Not that she disapproved of Mittie receiving attention; on the contrary, it was her oft-repeated boast that "Mittie had been keepin' company with the boys ever since she was six, and she 'spected she'd keep right on till she was sixty." It was not attention in the abstract that she objected to, it was rather the threatening of "a steady," and that steady, the big, awkward, shy Joe Ridder. With serpentine wisdom she instituted a counter-attraction.

Under her skilful manipulation, Ben Schenk, the son of the saloon-keeper, soon developed into a rival suitor. Ben was engaged at a down-town pool-room, and wore collars on a week-day without any apparent discomfort. The style of his garments, together with his easy air of sophistication, entirely captivated Mrs. Beaver, while Ben on his part found it increasingly pleasant to lounge in the Beavers' best parlour chair and recount to a credulous audience the prominent part which he was taking in all the affairs of the day.

Matters reached a climax one night when, after some close financing, Joe Ridder took Mittie to the Skating Rink. An unexpected run on the tin savings bank at the Ridders' had caused a temporary embarrassment, and by the closest calculation Joe could do no better than pay for two entrance-tickets and hire one pair of skates. He therefore found it necessary to develop a sprained ankle, which grew rapidly worse as they neared the rink.

"I don't think you orter skate on it, Joe!" said Mittie sympathetically.

"Oh, I reckon I kin manage it all O. K.," said Joe.

"But I ain't agoin' to let you!" she declared with divine authority. "We can just set down and rubber at the rest of them."

"Naw, you don't," said Joe; "you kin go on an' skate, and I'll watch you."

The arrangement proved entirely satisfactory so long as Mittie paused on every other round to rest or to get him to adjust a strap, or to hold her hat, but when Ben Schenk arrived on the scene, the situation was materially changed.

It was sufficiently irritating to see Ben go through an exhaustive exhibition of his accomplishments under the admiring glances of Mittie, but when he condescended to ask her to skate, and even offered to teach her some new figures, Joe's irritation rose to ire. In vain he tried to catch her eye; she was laughing and clinging to Ben and giving all her attention to his instructions.

Joe sat sullen and indignant, savagely biting his nails. He would have parted with everything he had in the world at that moment for three paltry nickels!

On and on went the skaters, and on and on went the music, and Joe turned his face to the wall and doggedly waited. When at last Mittie came to him flushed and radiant, he had no word of greeting for her.

"Did you see all the new steps Mr. Ben learnt me?" she asked.

"Naw," said Joe.

"Does yer foot hurt you, Joe?"

"Naw," said Joe.

Mittie was too versed in masculine moods

to press the subject. She waited until they were out under the starlight in the clear stretch of common near home. Then she slipped her hand through his arm and said coaxingly—

"Say now, Joe, what you kickin' 'bout?"

"Him," said Joe comprehensively.

"Mr. Ben? Why, he's one of our best friends. Maw likes him better'n anybody I ever kept company with. What have all you fellers got against him?"

"He was black marveled at the hall all right," said Joe grimly.

"What for?"

"It ain't none of my business to tell what for," said Joe, though his lips ached to tell what he knew.

"Maw says all you fellows are jealous 'cause he talks so pretty and wears such stylish clothes."

"We might, too, if we got 'em like he done," Joe began, then checked himself. "Say, Mittie, why don't yer maw like me?"

"She says you haven't got any school education and don't talk good grammar."

"Don't I talk good grammar?" asked Joe anxiously.

"I don't know," said Mittie; "that's what she says. How long did you go to school?"

"Me? Oh, off and on 'bout two year. The old man was always poorly, and Maw, she had to work out, till me an' the boys done got big enough to work. 'Fore that I had to stay home and mind the kids. Don't I talk like other fellers, Mittie?"

"You talk better than some," said Mittie loyally.

After he left her, Joe reviewed the matter carefully. He thought of the few educated people he knew—the boss at the shops, the preacher up on Twelfth Street, the doctor who sewed up his head after he stopped a runaway team, even Ben Schenk, who had gone through the eighth grade. Yes, there was a difference. Being clean and wearing good clothes were not the only things.

When he got home, he tiptoed into the front room, and picking his way around the various beds and pallets, took Berney's school satchel

from the top of the wardrobe. Retracing his steps, he returned to the kitchen, and with his hat still on and his coat collar turned up, he began to take an inventory of his mental stock.

One after another of the dog-eared, grimy books he pondered over, and one after another he laid aside, with a puzzled, distressed look deepening in his face.

"Berney she ain't but fourteen an' she gits on to 'em," he said to himself; "looks like I orter."

Once more he seized the nearest book, and with the courage of despair repeated the sentences again and again to himself.

"That you, Joe?" asked Mrs. Ridder from the next room an hour later. "I didn't know you'd come. Yer paw sent word by old man Jackson that he was at Hank's Exchange way down on Market Street, and fer you to come git him."

"It's twelve o'clock," remonstrated Joe.

"I know it," said Mrs. Ridder, yawning, "but I reckon you better go. The old man always

gits the rheumatiz when he lays out all night, and that there rheumatiz medicine cost sixty-five cents a bottle!''

''All right,'' said Joe with a resignation born of experience, ''but don't you go and put no more of the kids in my bed. Jack and Gus kick the stuffin' out of me now.''

And with this parting injunction he went wearily out into the night, giving up his struggle with Minerva, only to begin the next round with Bacchus.

The seeds of ambition, though sown late, grew steadily, and Joe became so desirous of proving worthy of the consideration of Mrs. Beaver that he took the boss of the shops partially into his confidence.

''It's a first-rate idea, Joe,'' said the boss, a big, capable fellow who had worked his way up from the bottom. ''I could move you right along the line if you had a better education. I have a good offer up in Chicago next year; if you can get more book sense in your head, I will take you along.''

''Where can I get it at?'' asked Joe, some-

what dubious of his own power of achievement.

"Night school," said the boss. "I know a man that teaches in the Settlement over on Burk Street. I'll put you in there if you like."

Now, the prospect of going to school to a man who had been head of a family for seven years, who had been the champion scrapper of the South End, who was in the midst of a critical love affair, was trebly humiliating. But Joe was game, and while he determined to keep the matter as secret as possible, he agreed to the boss's proposition.

"You're mighty stingy with yourself these days!" said Mittie Beaver one night a month later, when he stopped on his way to school.

Joe grinned somewhat foolishly. "I come every evenin'," he said.

"For 'bout ten minutes," said Mittie, with a toss of her voluminous pompadour; "there's some wants more'n ten minutes."

"Ben Schenk?" asked Joe, alert with jealousy.

"I ain't sayin'," went on Mittie. "What do you do of nights, hang around the hall?"

"Naw," said Joe indignantly. "There ain't nobody can say they've sawn me around the hall sence I've went with you!"

"Well, where do you go?"

"I'm trainin'," said Joe evasively.

"I don't believe you like me as much as you used to," said Mittie plaintively.

Joe looked at her dumbly. His one thought from the time he cooked his own early breakfast, down to the moment when he undressed in the cold and dropped into his place in bed between Gussie and Dick, was of her. The love of her made his back stop aching as he bent hour after hour over the machine; it made all the problems and hard words and new ideas at night school come straight at last; it made the whole sordid, ugly day swing round the glorious ten minutes that they spent together in the twilight.

"Yes, I like you all right," he said, twisting his big, grease-stained hands in embarrassment. "You're the onliest girl I ever could care about. Besides, I couldn't go with no other girl if I wanted to, 'cause I don't know none."

Is it small wonder that Ben Schenk's glib protestations, reinforced by Mrs. Beaver's own zealous approval, should have in time outclassed the humble Joe? The blow fell just when the second term of night school was over, and Joe was looking forward to long summer evenings of unlimited joy.

He had bought two tickets for a river excursion, and was hurrying into the Beavers' when he encountered a stolid bulwark in the form of Mrs. Beaver, whose portly person seemed permanently wedged into the narrow aperture of the front door. She sat in silent majesty, her hands just succeeding in clasping each other around her ample waist. Had she closed her eyes, she might have passed for a placid, amiable person, whose angles of disposition had also become curves. But Mrs. Beaver did not close her eyes. She opened them as widely as the geography of her face would permit, and coldly surveyed Joe Ridder.

Mrs. Beaver was a born manager; she had managed her husband into an untimely grave, she had managed her daughter from the hour

she was born, she had dismissed three preachers, induced two women to leave their husbands, and now dogmatically announced herself arbiter of fashions and conduct in Rear Ninth Street.

"No, she can't see you," she said firmly in reply to Joe's question. "She's going out to a dance party with Mr. Schenk."

"Where at?" demanded Joe, who still trembled in her presence.

"Somewheres down town," said Mrs. Beaver, "to a real swell party."

"He oughtn't to take her to no down-town dance," said Joe, his indignation getting the better of his shyness. "I don't want her to go, and I'm going to tell her so."

"In-deed!" said Mrs. Beaver in scorn. "And what have you got to say about it? I guess Mr. Schenk's got the right to take her anywhere he wants to!"

"What right?" demanded Joe, getting suddenly a bit dizzy.

" 'Cause he's got engaged to her. He's going to give her a real handsome turquoise ring, fourteen-carat gold."

"Didn't Mittie send me no word?" faltered Joe.

"No," said Mrs. Beaver unhesitatingly, though she had in her pocket a note for him from the unhappy Mittie.

Joe fumbled for his hat. "I guess I better be goin'," he said, a lump rising ominously in his throat. He got the gate open and made his way half dazed around the corner. As he did so, he saw a procession of small Ridders bearing joyously down upon him.

"Joe!" shrieked Lottie, arriving first, "Maw says hurry on home; we got another new baby to our house."

During the weeks that followed, Rear Ninth Street was greatly thrilled over the unusual event of a home wedding. The reticence of the groom was more than made up for by the bulletins of news issued daily by Mrs. Beaver. To use that worthy lady's own words, "she was in her elements!" She organised various committees—on decoration, on refreshment, and even on the bride's trousseau, tactfully permitting each assistant to contribute in some way

to the general grandeur of the occasion.

"I am going to have this a real showy wedding," she said from her point of vantage by the parlour window, where she sat like a field-marshal and issued her orders. "Those paper fringes want to go clean across every one of the shelves, and you all must make enough paper roses to pin 'round the edges of all the curtains. Ever'thing's got to look gay and festive."

"Mittie don't look very gay," ventured one of the assistants. "I seen her in the kitchen cryin' a minute ago."

"Mittie's a fool!" announced Mrs. Beaver calmly. "She don't know a good thing when she sees it! Get them draperies up a little higher in the middle; I'm going to hang a silver horseshoe on to the loop."

The wedding night arrived, and the Beaver cottage was filled to suffocation with the *élite* of Rear Ninth Street. The guests found it difficult to circulate freely in the room on account of the elaborate and aggressive decorations, so they stood in silent rows awaiting the approaching ceremony. As the appointed hour

drew near, and none of the groom's family arrived, a few whispered comments were exchanged.

"It's 'most time to begin," whispered the preacher to Mrs. Beaver, whose keen black eyes had been watching the door with growing impatience.

"Well, we won't wait on nobody," she said positively, as she rose and left the room to give the signal.

In the kitchen she found great consternation: the bride, pale and dejected in all her finery, sat on the table, all the chairs being in the parlour.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mrs. Beaver.

"He ain't come!" announced one of the women in tragic tones.

"Ben Schenk ain't here?" asked Mrs. Beaver in accents so awful that her listeners quaked. "Well, I'll see the reason why!"

Out into the night she sallied, picking her way around the puddles until she reached the saloon at the corner.

"Where's Ben Schenk?" she demanded sternly of the men around the bar.

There was an ominous silence, broken only by the embarrassed shuffling of feet.

Drawing herself up, Mrs. Beaver thumped the counter.

"Where's he at?" she repeated, glaring at the most embarrassed of the lot.

"He don't know where he's at," said the man. "I rickon he cilebrated a little too much fer the weddin'."

"Can he stand up?" demanded Mrs. Beaver.

"Not without starchin'," said the man, and amid the titter that followed, Mrs. Beaver made her exit.

On the corner she paused to reconnoitre. Across the street was her gaily lighted cottage, where all the guests were waiting. She thought of the ignominy that would follow their abrupt dismissal, she thought of the refreshments that must be used to-night or never, she thought of the little bride sitting disconsolate on the kitchen table.

With a sudden determination she decided to

lead a forlorn hope. Facing about, she marched weightily around to the rear of the saloon and began laboriously to climb the steps that lead to the hall. At the door she paused and made a rapid survey of the room until she found what she was looking for.

"Joe Ridder!" she called peremptorily.

Joe, haggard and listless, put down his billiard-cue and came to the door.

Five minutes later a breathless figure presented himself at the Beaver kitchen. He had on a clean shirt and his Sunday clothes, and while he wore no collar, a clean handkerchief was neatly pinned about his neck.

"Everybody but the bride and groom come into the parlour," commanded Mrs. Beaver. "I'm a-going to make a speech, and tell 'em that the bride has done changed her mind."

Joe and Mittie, left alone, looked at each other in dazed rapture. She was the first to recover.

"Joe!" she cried, moving timidly towards him, "ain't you mad? Do you still want me?"

Joe, with both hands entangled in her veil

and his feet lost in her train, looked down at her through swimming eyes.

"Want yer?" he repeated, and his lips trembled, "gee whiz! I feel like I done ribbeted a hoop round the hull world!"

The signal was given for them to enter the parlour, and without further interruption the ceremony proceeded, if not in exact accordance with the plans of Mrs. Beaver, at least in obedience to the mandate of a certain little autocrat who sometimes takes a hand in the affairs of man even in Rear Ninth Street.

THE SOUL OF O SANA SAN

THE SOUL OF O SANA SAN

O SANA SAN stood in the heart of a joyous world, as much a part of the radiant, throbbing, irresponsible spring as the golden butterfly which fluttered in her hand. Through the close-stemmed bamboos she could see the sparkling river racing away to the Inland Sea, while slow-moving junks, with their sixfold sails, glided with almost imperceptible motion toward a far-distant port. From below, across the rice-fields, came the shouts and laughter of naked bronze babies who played at the water's edge, and from above, high up on the ferny cliff, a mellow-throated temple bell answered the call of each vagrant breeze. Far away, shutting out the strange, big world, the luminous mountains hung in the purple mists of May.

And every note of color in the varied landscape, from the purple irises whose royal reflec-

tion stained the water below, to the rosy-tipped clover at the foot of the hill, was repeated in the kimono and *obi* of the child who flitted about in the grasses, catching butterflies in her long-handled net.

It was in the days of the Japanese-Russian War, but the constant echo of the great conflict that sounded around her disturbed her no more than it did the birds overhead. All day long the bugles sounded from the parade-grounds, and always and always the soldiers went marching away to the front. Around the bend in the river were miniature fortifications where recruits learned to make forts and trenches, and to shoot through tiny holes in a wall at imaginary Russian troopers. Down in the town below were long white hospitals where twenty thousand sick and wounded soldiers lay. No thought of the horror of it came to trouble O Sana San. The cherry-trees gladly and freely gave up their blossoms to the wind, and so much the country give up its men for the Emperor. Her father had marched away, then one brother, then another, and she had held up her hands and

shouted, "Banzai!" and smiled because her mother smiled. Everything was vague and uncertain, and no imagined catastrophe troubled her serenity. It was all the will of the Emperor, and it was well.

Life was a very simple matter to O Sana San. She rose when the sun climbed over the mountain, bathed her face and hands in the shallow copper basin in the garden, ate her breakfast of bean-curd and pickled fish and warm yellow tea. Then she hung the quilts over poles to sun, dusted the screens, and placed an offering of rice on the steps of the tiny shrine to Inari, where the little foxes kept guard. These simple duties being accomplished, she tied a bit of bean-cake in her gaily colored handkerchief, and stepping into her *geta,* went pattering off to school.

It was an English school, where she sat with hands folded through the long mornings, passively permitting the lessons to filter through her brain, and listening in smiling patience while the kind foreign ladies spoke incomprehensible things. Sometimes she helped pass the

hours by watching the shadows of the dancing leaves outside; sometimes she told herself stories about "The Old Man Who Made Withered Trees to Blossom," or about "Momotaro, the Little Peach Boy." Again she would repeat the strange English words and phrases that she heard, and would puzzle out their meaning.

But the sum of her lore consisted in being happy; and when the shadow of the mountains began to slip across the valley, she would dance back along the homeward way, singing with the birds, laughing with the rippling water, and adding her share of brightness to the sunshine of the world.

As she stood on this particular morning with her net poised over a butterfly, she heard the tramping of many feet. A slow cavalcade was coming around the road,—a long line of coolies bearing bamboo stretchers,—and in the rear, in a jinrikisha, was a foreign man with a red cross on his sleeve.

O Sana San scrambled up the bank and watched with smiling curiosity as the men halted

to rest. On the stretcher nearest her lay a young Russian prisoner with the fair skin and blond hair that are so unfamiliar to Japanese eyes. His blanket was drawn tight around his shoulders, and he lay very still, with lips set, gazing straight up through the bamboo leaves to the blue beyond.

Then it was that O Sana San, gazing in frank inquisitiveness at the soldier, saw a strange thing happen. A tear formed on his lashes and trickled slowly across his temple; then another and another, until they formed a tiny rivulet. More and more curious, she drew yet nearer, and watched the tears creep unheeded down the man's face. She was sure he was not crying, because soldiers never cry; it could not be the pain, because his face was very smooth and calm. What made the tears drop, drop on the hard pillow, and why did he not brush them away?

A vague trouble dawned in the breast of O Sana San. Running back to the field, she gathered a handful of wild flowers and returned to the soldier. The tears no longer fell, but his

lips quivered and his face was distorted with pain. She looked about her in dismay. The coolies were down by the river, drinking from their hands and calling to one another; the only person to whom she could appeal was the foreigner with the red cross on his arm who was adjusting a bandage for a patient at the end of the line.

With halting steps and many misgivings, she timidly made her way to his side; then placing her hands on her knees, she bowed low before him. The embarrassment of speaking to a stranger and a foreigner almost overwhelmed her, but she mustered her bravest array of English, and pointing to the stretcher, faltered out her message:

"Soldier not happy very much is. I sink soldier heart sorry."

The Red Cross orderly looked up from his work, and his eyes followed her gesture.

"He is hurt bad," he said shortly; "no legs, no arms."

"*So—deska?*" she said politely, then repeated

his words in puzzled incomprehension: "No-warms? Nowarms?"

When she returned to the soldier she gathered up the flowers which she had dropped by the wayside, and timidly offered them to him. For a long moment she waited, then her smile faded and her hand dropped. With a child's quick sensitiveness to rebuff, she was turning away when an exclamation recalled her.

The prisoner was looking at her in a strange, distressed way; his deep-set gray eyes glanced down first at one bandaged shoulder, then at the other, then he shook his head.

As O Sana San followed his glance, a startled look of comprehension sprang into her face. "Nowarms!" she repeated softly as the meaning dawned upon her, then with a little cry of sympathy she ran forward and gently laid her flowers on his breast.

The cavalcade moved on, under the warm spring sun, over the smooth white road, under the arching cryptomerias; but little O Sana San stood with her butterfly net over her shoulder

and watched it with troubled eyes. A dreadful something was stirring in her breast, something clutched at her throat, and she no longer saw the sunshine and the flowers. Kneeling by the roadside, she loosened the little basket which was tied to her *obi* and gently lifted the lid. Slowly at first, and then with eager wings, a dozen captive butterflies fluttered back to freedom.

Along the banks of the Upper Flowing River, in a rudely improvised hospital, lay the wounded Russian prisoners. To one of the small rooms at the end of the ward reserved for fatally wounded patients a self-appointed nurse came daily, and rendered her tiny service in the only way she knew.

O Sana San's heart had been so wrought upon by the sad plight of her soldier friend that she had begged to be taken to see him and to be allowed to carry him flowers with her own hand. Her mother, in whom smoldered the fires of dead samurai, was quick to be gracious to a fallen foe, and it was with her consent that O

Sana San went day after day to the hospital. The nurses humored her childish whim, thinking each day would be the last; but as the days grew into weeks and the weeks into months, her visits became a matter of course.

And the young Russian, lying on his rack of pain, learned to watch for her coming as the one hour of brightness in an interminable night of gloom. He made a sort of sun-dial of the cracks in the floor, and when the shadows reached a certain spot his tired eyes grew eager, and he turned his head to listen for the patter of the little *tabi* that was sure to sound along the hall.

Sometimes she would bring her picture-books and read him wonderful stories in words he did not understand, and show him the pictures of Momotaro, who was born out of a peach and who grew up to be so strong and brave that he went to the Ogres' Island and carried off all their treasures,—caps and coats that made their wearers invisible, jewels which made the tide come or go, coral and amber and tortoise-shell, —and all these things the little Peach Boy took back to his kind old foster mother and father,

and they all lived happily forever after. And in the telling O Sana San's voice would thrill, and her almond eyes grow bright, while her slender brown finger pointed out the figures on the gaily colored pages.

Sometimes she would sing to him, in soft minor strains, of the beauty of the snow on the pine-trees, or the wonders of Fuji-San.

And he would pucker his white lips and try to whistle the accompaniment, to her great amusement and delight.

Many were the treasures she brought forth from the depths of her long sleeves, and many were the devices she contrived to amuse him. The most ambitious achievement was a miniature garden in a wooden box—a wonderful garden where grasses stood for tall bamboo, and a saucer of water, surrounded by moss and pebbles, made a shining lake across which a bridge led through a *torii* to a diminutive shrine above.

He would watch her deft fingers fashioning the minute objects, and listen to her endless prattle in her soft, unknown tongue, and for a little space the pain-racked body would relax

and the cruel furrows vanish from between his brows.

But there were days in which the story and the song and the play had no part. At such times O Sana San slipped in on tiptoe and took her place at the head of the cot where he could not see her. Sitting on her heels, with hand folded in hand, she watched patiently for hours, alert to adjust the covers or smooth the pillow, but turning her eyes away when the spasms of pain contorted his face. All the latent maternity in the child rose to succor his helplessness. The same instinct that had prompted her to strap her doll upon her back when yet a mere baby herself, made her accept the burden of his suffering, and mother him with a very passion of tenderness.

Longer and sultrier grew the days; the wistaria, hanging in feathery festoons from many a trellis, gave way to the flaming azalea, and the azalea in turn vanished with the coming of the lotus that floated sleepily in the old castle moat.

Still the soul of the young Russian was held a prisoner in his shattered body, and the spirit in

him grew restive at the delay. Months passed before the doctor told him his release was at hand. It was early in the morning, and the sun fell in long, level rays across his cot. He turned his head and looked wistfully at the distance it would have to travel before it would be afternoon.

The nurse brought the screen and placed it about the bed—the last service she could render. For hours the end was expected, but moment by moment he held death at bay, refusing to accept the freedom that he so earnestly longed for. At noon the sky became overcast and the slow falling of rain was heard on the low wooden roof. But still his fervent eyes watched the sun-dial.

At last the sound of *geta* was heard without, and in a moment O Sana San slipped past the screen and dropped on her knees beside him. Under one arm was tightly held a small white kitten, her final offering at the shrine of love.

When he saw her quaint little figure, a look of peace came over his face and he closed his eyes. An interpreter, knowing that a prisoner

was about to die, came to the bedside and asked if he wanted to leave any message. He stirred slightly then, in a scarcely audible voice, asked in Russian what the Japanese word was for "good-by." A long pause followed, during which the spirit seemed to hover irresolute upon the brink of eternity.

O Sana San sat motionless, her lips parted, her face full of the awe and mystery of death. Presently he stirred and turned his head slowly until his eyes were on a level with her own.

"*Sayonara,*" he whispered faintly, and tried to smile; and O Sana San, summoning all her courage to restrain the tears, smiled bravely back and whispered, "Sayonara."

It was scarcely said before the spirit of the prisoner started forth upon his final journey, but he went not alone. The soul of a child went with him, leaving in its place the tender, new-born soul of a woman.

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